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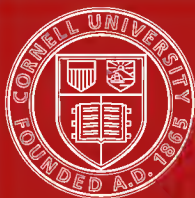
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F R A G M E N T

ON

T H E C H U R C H.

BY

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following pages are a part of a much larger work which Dr. Arnold contemplated, but which was interrupted by his early death.

The executors having kindly allowed me to fulfil my wishes as to this fragment, I have felt it a duty not to withhold what remains from his pen on the subject which so greatly occupied his thoughts.

The references, which it was not his habit to make till after the work for which they were required was completed, have been in part supplied.

Before he began the work in the more historical form in which it appears in these pages, he had already, on two occasions, approached the question of Church and State. These fragmentary essays—for they are scarcely more—it is intended to include in a volume containing some of his miscellaneous works.

M. A.

Fox How, October 5, 1844.

THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

THE language of prophecy leads us to hope for more than the salvation of a certain number of individuals through the gospel. It speaks of a general restoration, so complete as to repair altogether the mischief which had been introduced into the world by sin. And the language of St. Paul, when declaring the great mystery of his preaching, namely, the admission of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God, seems also to go beyond the redemption of a few individuals, comparatively speaking, out of the multitude of all nations. Christ was to present unto himself a Church holy and without blemish; and the distinction made by some between the visible and invisible Church, seems only a later refinement of interpretation, suggested by the fact that the Church, in the obvious sense of the term, was not pure and spotless. Now ought we to lower the language of prophecy, in order to make it agree with the existing state of things? or to be anxious to amend the existing state of things, for the

very reason that it does not correspond with the promises of Scripture?

The spread of Christianity, speaking of the geographical extent of its mere nominal dominion, has been partial;—its real moral effects have been still more partial. The largest part of the world does not acknowledge Christ so much as in name; and where he is acknowledged in name, he is yet denied in many instances in works. The perfect work of the Gospel has been seen only in individuals: Christ has laid his hands on a few sick folk and healed them; but he has done no mighty work of spiritual healing on a whole church. It is still most true, that we see not yet all things put under him.

Now are we prepared to say that, whereas the world was lost by one man's sin, it was only to be in a small part recovered by one man's righteousness?—that, whereas through Adam all died, only a very small number were through Christ to be made alive? This is directly contrary to the language of Scripture, which represents the redemption as designed to be a full reparation of the evil occasioned by the fall.

Or are we prepared to say that God's purposes have been defeated by the greater power of God's enemy?—that sin has been stronger than grace, Satan mightier than Christ?—that the Church with its divine Head and its indwelling Spirit

has been unable to overcome the powers of evil?—that the medicine was too weak to overcome the disease?

If neither of these alternatives be true; if the Scripture will not allow us to doubt of God's gracious will towards us all; and if to doubt his power be blasphemy,—what remains, but that we have weakened and corrupted that medicine, which was in itself sufficient to heal us?—that we have not tried, and are not trying Christianity, such as Christ willed it to be?—that the Church, against which the powers of hell have so long maintained an advantageous conflict, cannot be that same Church against which Christ declared that they should not prevail?

Now here it is necessary, in order to prevent much confusion and very much uncharitableness, to distinguish carefully between what I may be allowed to call Christian religion and the Christian Church^a.

By Christian religion, I mean that knowledge of God and of Christ, and that communion of the Holy Spirit, by which an individual is led through life, in all holiness, and dies with the confident hope of rising again through Christ at the last day. This knowledge being derived, or derivable at any rate, from the Scriptures alone, and this communion being the answer to our earnest

^a [See Serm. xxxix. in vol. iv. ; Lect. on Modern Hist. vi.]

prayers, it is perfectly possible that Christian religion may work its full work on an individual living alone, or living amongst unbelieving or ungodly men,—that here, where the business rests only with God and the individual soul, God's glory may be exalted and the man's salvation effected, whatever may be the state of the Church at large.

But, by the Christian Church, I mean that provision for the communicating, maintaining, and enforcing of this knowledge by which it was to be made influential, not on individuals, but on masses of men. This provision consisted in the formation of a society, which by its constitution should be capable of acting both within itself and without; having, so to speak, a twofold movement, the one for its outward advance, the other for its inward life and purification; so that Christianity should be at once spread widely, and preserved the while in its proper truth and vigour, till Christian knowledge should be not only communicated to the whole world, but be embraced also in its original purity, and bring forth its practical fruit. Thus Christian religion and the Christian Church being two distinct things, the one acting upon individuals, the other upon masses; it is very possible for the former to continue to do its work, although the latter be perverted or disabled. But then the consequence will be such

as we see before us, that Christianity, being designed to remedy the intensity of the evil of the fall by its religion, and the universality of the evil by its Church, has succeeded in the first, because its religion has been retained as God gave it, but has failed in the second, because its Church has been greatly corrupted.

Christianity, then, contains on the one hand a divine philosophy, which we may call its religion, and a divine polity, which is its Church.

But it is precisely from an acknowledgment of this last truth, accompanied with a misunderstanding of its real nature, that the greatest part of the actual mischief has arisen. When we say, therefore, that Christianity contains a divine polity, namely, its Church, it is of the utmost importance that we have a clear notion of the Christian Church, according to what we may gather from the Scripture to have been the mind of its divine Founder.

Now, that religion should be a social as well as an individual concern, is nothing peculiar to Christianity, if by religion we mean the outward and visible worship of God. The act of sacrifice, almost of necessity, involves the cooperation of more than a single person;—festivals and solemn processions, even hymns of thanksgiving and praise, can scarcely be performed by one alone. Religion, then, in that sense in which the ancient world

generally understood it, that is, public and visible worship, has always been, and must always be, the business of several persons together;—the religion of a single individual must, in this sense, be something imperfect, and only in a very small degree possible.

But the peculiarity of Christianity consists in this, that while it takes religion in another sense, and means by it, not the visible worship of God, but the service of the heart towards him; and whilst it would thus appear that religion could exist perfectly in one single individual, and required no cooperation of more persons, yet still it is made the business of a number or multitude, and our spiritual relations to God are represented as matters of a joint interest, no less than that visible worship which, in its very nature, must be more than individual.

Now it is seen and generally acknowledged, that men's physical welfare has been greatly promoted by the cooperation of a number of persons endowed with unlike powers and resources. One man having what another wants, and wanting what another has, there is an obvious wisdom in so combining their efforts, as that the strength of one should supply the weakness of another, and so the weakness should in no case be perceptible.

This cooperative principle, founded on the great dissimilarity which prevails amongst men, was by

Christianity to be applied to moral purposes, as it had long been to physical^a; each man was to regard his intellectual and moral gifts as a means of advancing the intellectual and moral good of society; what he himself wanted was to be supplied out of the abundance of his neighbour;—and thus the moral no less than the physical weaknesses of each individual, were to be strengthened and remedied, till they should vanish as to their enfeebling effects both with respect to himself and to the community.

Nothing could be more general than such a system of cooperation. It extended to every part of life; not only going far beyond that cooperation for ritual purposes, which was the social part of the old religions, but, so far as men's physical well-being had been the sole object of existing civil societies, it went far beyond them also. For though it is possible, and unhappily too easy, to exclude moral considerations from our notions of physical good, and from our notions of ritual religion, yet it is not easy, in looking to the moral good of man, to exclude considerations of his physical well-being. Every outward thing having a tendency to affect his moral character, either for the better or for the worse, and this especially holding good with respect to riches or poverty,

^a [See Introduction to Sermons on Christian Life, its Course, its Hindrances, and its Helps, p. xlviii.]

economical questions, in all their wide extent, fall directly under the cognizance of those whose object is to promote man's moral welfare.

But while thus general, the object of Christian co-operation was not to be vague. When men combined to offer sacrifice, or to keep festival, there was a definite object of their union; but the promotion of man's moral welfare might seem indistinct and lost in distance. Something nearer and more personal was therefore to be mixed up with that which was indistinct from its very vastness. The direct object of Christian cooperation was to bring Christ into every part of common life; in scriptural language, to make human society one living body, closely joined in communion with Christ, its head. And for this purpose, one of the very simplest acts of natural necessity was connected with the very deepest things of religion: —the meal of an assembly of Christians was made the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. And the early church well entered into the spirit of this ordinance, when it began every day by a partaking of the holy communion. For when Christ was thus brought into one of the commonest acts of nature and of common society, it was a lively lesson, that in every other act through the day he should be made present also: if Christians at their very social meal could enter into the highest spiritual communion, it taught

them that in all matters of life, even when separated from one another bodily, that same communion should be preserved inviolate; that in all things they were working for and with one another, with and to Christ and God.

Such appears, even from the meagre account of a stranger, to have been the manner of living of the Christians of Bithynia, about a hundred years after the birth of our Lord, and about seventy therefore from the first preaching of Christianity. They met before day, and sang together a hymn to Christ: then they bound themselves to one another by oath,—according to Pliny's expression, "sacramento," but in reality, we may be sure, by their joint partaking of the communion of Christ's body and blood,—that they would neither steal, nor rob, nor commit adultery, nor break faith, nor refuse to restore what had been entrusted to them. Then they went to their day's work, and met again to partake their meal together; which they probably hallowed, either by making it a direct communion, or by some prayers, or hymns, which reminded them of their Christian fellowship.

Now in this account, short as it is, we see the two great principles of the Christian Church: first, cooperation for general moral improvement, for doing the duties of life better; and secondly, the bringing Christ as it were into their communion, by beginning the day with him, and deriving their

principle of virtuous living directly from his sacrament. The church of Bithynia existed on a small scale, in a remote province ; but here are precisely those leading principles of the Christian Church exemplified, which were fitted for all circumstances and all places, and which contain in them that essential virtue which the Church was to embody and to diffuse.

It is obvious, also, that the object of Christian society being thus extensive, and relating not to ritual observances, but to the improvement of the whole of our life, the natural and fit state of the Church is, that it should be a sovereign society or commonwealth ; as long as it is subordinate and municipal, it cannot fully carry its purposes into effect. This will be evident, if we consider that law and government are the sovereign influences on human society ; that they in the last resort shape and control it at their pleasure ; that institutions depend on them, and are by them formed and modified ; that what they sanction will ever be generally considered innocent ; that what they condemn is thereby made a crime, and if persisted in becomes rebellion ; and that those who hold in their hands the power of life and death must be able greatly to obstruct the progress of whatever they disapprove of, and those who dispose of all the honours and rewards of society must, in the same way, be greatly able to

advance whatever they think excellent. So long, then, as the sovereign society is not Christian, and the Church is not sovereign, we have two powers alike designed to act upon the whole of our being, but acting often in opposition to one another. Of these powers, the one has wisdom, the other external force and influence; and from the division of these things, which ought ever to go together, the wisdom of the Church cannot carry into effect the truths which it sees and loves; whilst the power of government, not being guided by wisdom, influences society for evil rather than for good^a.

The natural and true state of things then is, that this power and this wisdom should be united; that human life should not be pulled to pieces between two claimants, each pretending to exercise control over it, not in some particular portion, but universally; that wisdom should be armed with power, power guided by wisdom; that the Christian Church should have no external force to thwart its beneficent purposes; that government should not be poisoned by its internal ignorance or wickedness, and thus advance the cause of God's enemy, rather than perform the part of God's vicerent.

This is the perfect notion of a Christian Church,

^a [See Lectures on Modern History (Inaug. Lect. and Appendix).]

that it should be a sovereign society, operating therefore with full power for raising its condition, first morally, and then physically; operating through the fullest developement of the varied faculties and qualities of its several members, and keeping up continually, as the bond of its union, the fellowship of all its people with one another through Christ, and their communion with him as their common head.

With this notion of a perfect Church two things are utterly inconsistent:—first, the destroying of the principle of cooperation through the varied talents and habits of the several members of the society, and substituting in the place of it a system in which a very few should be active and the great mass passive^a; a system in which vital heat was to be maintained, not by the even circulation of the blood through every limb, through the healthy cooperation of the arteries and veins of every part, but by external rubbing and chafing, when the limbs, from a suspension of their inward activity, had become cold and paralyzed.

Secondly, the taking of any part or parts of human life out of its control, by a pretended distinction between spiritual things and secular; a distinction utterly without foundation, for in one sense all things are secular, for they are done in

^a [Intro. to *Sermons on Christian Life, its Course, its Hindrances, and its Helps*, pp. xlvi, xlvii.]

time and on earth ; in another, all things are spiritual, for they affect us morally either for the better or the worse, and so tend to make our spirits fitter for the society of God or of his enemies. The division rests entirely on principles of heathenism, and tends to make Christianity, like the religions of the old world, not a sovereign discipline for every part and act of life, but a system for communicating certain abstract truths, and for the performance of certain visible rites and ceremonies.

These two notions, both utterly inconsistent with the idea of a true Christian Church, have been prevalent alternately or conjointly almost from the very beginning of Christianity. To the first we owe Popery in all its shapes, Romanist or Protestant ; the second is the more open form of Antichrist, which, by its utter dissoluteness, has gone far to reduce countries nominally Christian to a state of lawlessness and want of principle worse than the worst heathenism.

But these two Antichrists have ever prepared the way for each other ; and the falsehood of the one has led directly to the falsehood of its apparent opposite, but real ally and cooperator.

I begin, then, with the first of these two evils : the substitution of the activity of some in place of the activity of all ; the distinction of the grand characteristic of the Christian Church, the co-

operation, namely, of society through the several faculties and qualities of its members, for the attainment of the highest moral good of all.

This life, as it may well be called, of the Church, may be injured by an extreme predominance of the activity of some members, by which the others are necessarily rendered less active. A mere exaggeration of the principles of government may effect this, and it may arise out of the most benevolent feelings. Kind and earnest teachers commit this very mistake when they assist their pupil too much; they feel that they can do the work better than he can, and that their assistance will enable him to accomplish his task in a shorter time, and more effectually. But they really injure him; because the greater completeness and clearness of any one particular piece of knowledge is a far less benefit than the strengthening of his own faculties by exercise: the knowledge thus given is not power, but is gained at the cost of power, and is a hindrance rather than a help to the wholesome acquisition of knowledge hereafter. Even so benevolent governments, seeing the ignorance and mistaken notions of their people, are eager to fence them in on every side by their own care, and to act for them, because they were likely of themselves to act wrong. But unhappily with the tares they thus pluck up the good seed also; the people get accustomed to let

the government act for them ; they thus may acquire the innocence of infancy or death, but they acquire also the incapacity of those states for good ; and the result is not a living spirit but a lifeless corpse.

Still, it must not be forgotten that with government the error is only in the excess or in the unseasonableness of its activity. In itself it is beneficent and necessary. Its abuses are no argument against its existence ; it is founded on truth, and is indispensable in every state of society. But the life of the Church was impaired far more fatally by the introduction of another principle very distinct from that of government, the principle of priesthood. Persons unaccustomed to examine the subject thoroughly have often very confused ideas about priesthood ; they profess utterly to disclaim it, while in fact they are zealously maintaining it. But the essential point in the notion of a priest is this, that he is a person made necessary to our intercourse with God, without being necessary or beneficial to us morally. His interference makes the worshipper neither a wiser man nor a holier than he would have been without it ; and yet it is held to be indispensable. This unreasonable, unmoral, unspiritual necessity is the essence of the idea of priesthood.

Priesthood, then, is properly mediation, taking

this last word in its etymological rather than in its common meaning. When the act on the worshipper's part is already complete, whether the worship be ritual or spiritual, the presence or interference of a priest is made a necessary medium through which alone the act can be presented to God. For instance, suppose that the worshipper has a right belief concerning God, and knows what he desires to ask of God, the act of prayer on his part is complete; but if it be said that his prayer must be offered to God by another, and that otherwise God will not accept it, then here is the exact notion of priesthood. It ceases to be priesthood, and becomes teaching or assistance, if the act on the worshipper's part cannot be morally or reasonably complete without the aid of another. He who knows not what to pray for, cannot by himself complete the act of prayer, but requires to be taught in order to do it. This teaching, however, is not priesthood, because the necessity for its interposition is reasonable, moral, and spiritual.

A priest, therefore, as he does not make the worshipper more fit to worship in himself, implies necessarily that man cannot approach God. The necessity for his mediation arises out of this: man cannot approach God, but he may approach to some other being, and this other being may approach God. Thus this intermediate being stands

to man in the place of God, and man's direct relations towards God himself are declared to be an impossibility.

We have arrived at a great and divine truth; the very foundation stone, indeed, of Christianity. We cannot come to God directly; we require one to be to us in the place of God. But one in the place of God and not God, is as it were a falsehood; it is the mother falsehood from which all idolatry is derived. The mystery of Christianity has met this necessity of our nature, and at the same time has avoided the evil of the falsehood. We have one who is to us in the place of God, but who is also God truly;—we have one whom we may approach, although we cannot approach God, for he is also truly man.

It has been well said, that no error is mere error; something there is of truth ever mixed with it. So the error of human priesthoods does indeed but express a great truth, that man cannot come to God without a mediator. But this truth is to man, when left to his own devices, either useless or mischievous. He attempts to act upon it by devising for himself a human mediator, and he falls at once into superstition and idolatry.

Again, the human mediator, as I have said before, does nothing to bring us in ourselves really nearer to God. His interference at all, implies that we are separated from God; this separation

is a moral thing, arising out of our unlikeness to God. But the human mediator does nothing to restore to us God's likeness. It is strictly true, therefore, that his interposition has no moral value: it makes us neither better nor holier; it therefore shows the falsehood of its own claim; for while professing to bring us to God, it leaves us as far from him as ever.

But the true Mediator does not so: while he reconciles God to man, he also reconciles man to God. He works by his Spirit upon our own nature, and weeds out from it the seeds as it were of our alienation from God. Thus he does bring us near to God, for he makes us like God. And he is our one and only Priest, our one and only Mediator.

Some there are who profess to join cordially in this doctrine, and ask who disputes it. So little do they understand the very tenets which they uphold. For they themselves dispute and deny it, inasmuch as they maintain that the sacraments are necessary to salvation, and that they can only be effectually administered by a man appointed after a certain form. And thus they set up again the human mediator, which is idolatry, and they show the falsehood of his claim, because they make a man like ourselves necessary to bring us near to God, and this man, who is to complete Christ's work, and reconcile to God those whom

Christ had left alienated, cannot touch the slightest part of the soul or mind of any one. If we were separated from God, he cannot bring us to him; for we remain in ourselves, when his ministration is over, just the same as we were before.

This dogma, then, of a human priesthood in Christ's church, appointed to administer his sacraments, and thereby to mediate between God and man, from no reasonable or moral necessity, is a thing quite distinct from any exaggerated notions of the activity of government: it is not the excess of a beneficent truth, but it is, from first to last, considering that it is addressed to Christians, who have their Divine Priest and Mediator already, a mere error; and an error not merely speculative, but fraught with all manner of mischief, idolatrous and demoralizing, destructive of Christ's Church; injurious to Christ and to his Spirit; the worst and earliest form of Antichrist.

This error is demoralizing, because it has led to the false distinction between secular things and spiritual, and has tended to bring back Christianity to the likeness of a heathen religion, by changing it from a law of life to a matter of rites and outward observances; from which the care of the general moral character of every man is a thing altogether different.

It has led to the false distinction between secular things and spiritual. For in all the acts of

life into which it was the design of Christianity to bring God and Christ, the priest is altogether excluded. In the works of justice and mercy, in the feelings of devotion, of hope, of fear, of love, the priest can find no place, for what is real and moral repels him. His element is only what is formal, shadowy, ceremonial; and in order to make himself of importance, he must raise what is shadowy and ceremonial into the place of what is real and moral. Men can act in life without him, and feel without him; but he tells them that certain ceremonial acts cannot be performed without him, and then he goes on and teaches that these ceremonial acts are the essence of religion.

But in Christianity his task was hard, because even in its very ceremonies the essence was something real and moral. When Christians met together and received the bread and wine of their common living as the body and blood of Christ, such an act had a real tendency to strengthen and confirm their souls, and the Holy Spirit made such a communion a constant means of grace to those who partook of it. But here there was no place for the priest; on the one side there was Christ's Church assembled, on the other there was Christ and his Spirit to bless them. The priest then steps in, diverts attention from the moral part of this communion, from its peculiar

union of things divine and human, of social feelings and religious, from its hallowing of common life, by making us even eat and drink to God's glory and our own salvation, and fixes it upon a supposed mystical virtue conveyed to the bread and wine by the pronouncing of certain words over them by a certain person. The bread and wine became the sacrament of Christ's body and blood according to Christ's ordinance, by the assembled church receiving them as such; by their converting an act of nature into an act of religion; by their agreeing to partake together as of their earthly food, so also of their spiritual, and thus being joined to one another in Christ. The agreement, therefore, of those communicating, their common faith and love constitute the real consecration of the bread and wine; it is this which, through Christ's Spirit, changes the supper into the sacrament.

But the priest says, "Not so: it is not your common faith and purpose to celebrate the communion; it is not the fact of Christ having died and risen again which can bring him to you or you to him: I must interpose, and pronounce certain words over the bread and over the cup; and then what neither your faith nor Christ's redemption of you had made other than common food, becomes now, through my mediation, a thing endowed with a divine virtue; nay, it is become Christ himself.

Whether there be any communion of yourselves or no, whether you are alone or with one another, whether you are concurring in spirit or no, still because I, the priest, have pronounced certain words over it, it has acquired a miraculous power, and unless you are partakers of this you cannot be saved." So the communion of the Church, which morally was so essential, is thus made unessential; and the uttering certain words by a particular person, of which neither Christ nor his apostles had said any thing, and which morally can have no virtue at all, is made essential. And thus was the Church supplanted by the priest; and the communion, which is the very life of the Church, became the mass, with all its superstitious and idolatries.

The Church being set aside, and the principal part in the communion being transferred from it to the priest, his office grew in importance, and the Church, in the same proportion, became removed from Christ, and desecrated. Then the priest was regarded as the minister of Christ in spiritual things, the Church only in temporal. For not only in the communion, but in the public prayers and exhortations of the Church, the Church itself was reduced more and more to a passive condition,—the priest alone was active. Thus there were some whose business was religion, and others whose business it was not. Religion and

life were separated ; the one was called spiritual, when it was in reality become less so ; the other was called, and became too truly, secular. The salt which Christ had given to the Church, that each man might by it render the world and worldly things pure and holy to him, the Church had now to seek from the priest ; and because it was to be sought from another, it in great measure lost its savour.

CHAPTER II.

It has been stated generally that the efficacy of the Church has been destroyed by the excess of a good and necessary principle, that of government, and the introduction of another principle wholly false and mischievous, that of priesthood. The first in itself the Church recognises, and must ever recognise; the second she wholly repudiates. And thus we shall find that, while there is much said in Scripture in commendation of the one, the other is altogether omitted, as an element belonging to Heathenism and not to Christianity.

Now, omitting all the commandments given us to obey government in general, and all such passages as claim obedience to the Apostles personally, we find several injunctions to submit ourselves to the rulers of the church, being Christians, and yet not being Apostles;—and all these injunctions are a proof of our first position, that the principle of government in the Christian Church is recognised and sanctioned in the Scriptures.

I. St. Paul, in the earliest of all his Epistles,

the first to the Thessalonians, entreats the church of Thessalonica to acknowledge or recognise, *εἰδέναι*, those that laboured among them, and were over them in the Lord, and who admonished them, *νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς*. And he calls on the church to “esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.”^a

II. In two passages, (Galatians vi. 6, and 1 Timothy v. 17,) he asserts the claim of the governors of the church to be maintained by the church. In the first, indeed, he speaks only of such governors of the church as are instructors; *κοινωνεῖτω δὲ ὁ κατηχούμενος τὸν λόγον τῷ κατηχοῦντι ἐν πάσιν ἀγαθοῖς*;—but in the second passage, while he acknowledges the especial claim of such, he extends the right to all rulers of the church generally, whatever may be their particular functions: *οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες πρεσβυτεροὶ διπλῆς τιμῆς ἀξιούσθωσαν*.

III. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says also, “Obey your rulers and submit to them;”—and that this means the Christian rulers of the church is evident by what follows, “for they watch as men who are to give an account for your souls;”—which of course could not be said of Heathen authorities.

IV. To these may be added all that is said of the qualifications of an *ἐπίσκοπος* in the first

^a 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

Epistle to Timothy and in that to Titus; and which implies that government in the church was a thing essential, and recognised from the beginning.

V. St. Peter, as if writing under the liveliest recollection of our Lord's charge to himself, and of the strong contrast which Christ had drawn between the common practice of heathen government and that which should prevail among Christians, thus writes in his first Epistle (v. 2) to the elders of the several churches—"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof," (ἐπισκοποῦντες,) "not by constraint, but willingly;" (Lachman adds κατὰ θεόν, 'as becomes a servant and child of God;') "not for filthy lucre," (which implies that lucre *might* be a motive, that is, that the rulers of the church were maintained by the church,) "but of a ready mind."

VI. We read also in the Acts, that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders to govern the churches which they founded in Lycaonia and the south of Asia Minor^a; and St. Paul addresses the elders of the church of Ephesus^b, in the same language as St. Peter, charging them "to feed the church of God." Now this term of "feeding as a shepherd feeds his flock," is one of the oldest and most universal metaphors to express a supreme and at the same time a beneficent government.

It is needless to multiply other passages, as

^a xiv. 23.

^b xx. 28.

those already quoted are abundantly sufficient to show that Christianity supposes and sanctions the principle of government in the church, and reciprocally the principle of obedience; that in this respect the church was to resemble all other societies;—some of its members were to rule and others were to be subject.

But of the principle of priesthood, by which one man or set of men are declared to be necessary mediators for their brethren, so that without them their brethren cannot worship God acceptably or be suffered to approach him, the Scriptures contain not one word, except as rejecting and condemning it. This of course cannot be shown by extracts as to the negative part of it: it will be sufficient to show that the passages usually quoted by the advocates of the priesthood as sanctioning their notions are all misinterpreted, or misapplied; and then to give some passages which assert the contrary to the doctrine of the priesthood, and describe it as one of the great privileges of the Christian Church, that its one great High Priest Jesus Christ has given it full access to God for ever, so that there is nothing for priesthood to do, or rather for human priesthood to pretend to do for it, any more, so long as earth shall endure.

The principle of priesthood unmixed with any other is seen in the Christian Church most plainly

in the claim to administer the Lord's Supper. I say this rather than, in the claim to administer the sacraments generally, or in the so-called power of the keys,—because although something of the notion of priesthood has undoubtedly been mixed with both these, and especially with the latter; and although in practice absolution has come to be a proper priestly act, yet in their origin both the power of baptizing and that of absolving were in a great degree acts of government; being in fact the power of admitting or of restoring members to the privileges of the Christian society. But the claim of administering the Lord's Supper is the assumption of a power exclusively priestly; it interposes in an act with which government has nothing to do, and its supposed object is merely inward and spiritual—to give a spiritual efficacy to that which without its interference would have been common food. The Scripture, then, might recognise an exclusive power of baptizing or of excommunicating and absolving, without at all countenancing the notion of a priesthood, because it might view such a power as one naturally belonging to the rulers of any society, and as connected therefore with government only. But if it be found to recognise an exclusive claim of administering the Lord's Supper, then no doubt it must be allowed in the strictest sense to recognise in Christianity a human priesthood.

This power is said accordingly to be recognised by the Apostle Paul in two passages, 1 Corinth. iv. 1, and again in the same Epistle, x. 16.

I. In the first passage St. Paul says, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and *stewards of the mysteries of God.*" It is contended that, by this last expression, St. Paul means to say that himself and his fellow ministers were "dispensers of the sacraments."

But, in the first place, Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not in the Scripture sense mysteries at all. A mystery, in the Scripture, is a hidden truth;—almost always, it signifies a truth hidden generally from men, but revealed to the people of God. By a figure, Christ himself is twice called "the mystery of God," or "of godliness,"^a because his manifestation in the flesh is the great truth which Christianity has revealed to us. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are actions connected with the Christian mysteries, but they are not mysteries themselves; much less are they so especially deserving of the term as to engross it to themselves, and to become the prominent idea expressed by it.

Again; by whatever name St. Paul might have called himself, it certainly would not have been "a dispenser of the sacraments." He had just before said that his business was not to baptize,

^a Coloss. i. 27. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

but to preach the gospel; that, so far from its being his office to “dispense the sacraments,” he had only baptized three or four individuals in the course of his whole ministry at Corinth. He who thus studiously devolved on others the ministration of one of the sacraments, could scarcely have desired the Corinthians to regard him as being appointed especially to dispense them.

On the other hand, we find him saying, a little before, that he and his fellow ministers were in the habit of speaking of “the wisdom of God in a mystery,” or rather “God’s secret or hidden wisdom,”—the wisdom hidden from men, which God foreordained before the world unto our glory. And again, further on in the Epistle, he uses the expression, “I have had a dispensation” (or ‘stewardship,’ if *οἰκόννομος* in the former passage be translated ‘steward’) “entrusted to me.” Now this dispensation is so certainly the “dispensation of the Gospel,” by preaching, that the gloss *ἐὐαγγελίου* has actually found its way into the text, and is expressed in the common editions, and in our translation. It is shown by the whole context, in which he repeatedly says that his business is “to preach the Gospel.” There can be no doubt, therefore, that when he describes himself as “a steward or dispenser of the mysteries of God,” he means that very same “speaking of the wisdom of God in a mystery,” that very same “dispensa-

tion of the Gospel by preaching," which in other parts of this Epistle he declares to have been his business as an Apostle; just as he declares also that "to dispense the sacraments" was not his business; for he says, "God called me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel."

II. The second passage is as follows: "the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?" This shows, it is argued, that it belonged to the Apostles to bless the cup at the communion, and to break the bread; in other words, to consecrate the elements, and so to give to them their sacramental character and virtue. It is necessary to say that I have myself heard and read this interpretation; I do not pretend to know how many there are who adopt it.

It is evident that the whole force of this passage depends on the meaning of the word "we." If "we" means "we Apostles," as distinguished from other Christians, then the argument would have some plausibility; but if "we" means not "we Apostles," but "we Christians," then the whole argument falls to the ground at once. Now the very next verse goes on as follows: "For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." It is then, not "we the Apostles," but "we Chris-

tians," "we being many," "we all," "who bless the cup of blessing, and break the bread." So far from proving that there exists in Christianity a priestly power in the administration of the communion, this passage rather shows the contrary.

The contrary also fully appears from the general language of the New Testament. It is declared as plainly as words can speak, that, in a religious sense, all Christians are equal before God, and that all are brought near to him, have access to him, are reconciled to him, are his heirs, and his children. Now some of these terms were applicable to the whole Jewish church, and yet in that church there was undoubtedly a human priesthood. But the Epistle to the Hebrews shows the great distinction, when it says that we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; that sacrifices must therefore cease to be offered; and that as the especial object of the Jewish priesthood was to sacrifice, so it may be presumed, that where no sacrifice remains to be offered^a, so neither should there be any priest. It is not pretended that all Christians are equal socially; for some are governors and others are governed: nor are they so equal as to render distinctions for order's sake in their public meetings

^a For his own view of what was the true Christian sacrifice still continued, see *Introduct. to Serm.* vol. iv. p. 1; *Serm.* vol. v. p. 273.

unnecessary; for women are not allowed to speak in the congregation: but they are equal religiously, as being all alike redeemed by Christ, and brought by him near to God; that is, put into a condition to offer to him acceptably all religious offices; and in the only remaining kind of sacrifice, the spiritual offering of themselves to God, commanded to be, every man his own priest; inasmuch as by ourselves alone can our own hearts and bodies be devoted as thank-offerings to him who made them and redeemed them.

We find, then, no place in Scripture for the notion that any human mediation is required in order to perfect the purely religious acts of Christians. As all Christians can pray acceptably through Christ's mediation, so can all communicate acceptably in the signs of his body and blood; such communion being manifestly not an act peculiar to the rulers of the society, but belonging to all the members of it; and therein differing from baptism, which is an act of government, so to speak, as well as an act of religion; and may, therefore, be fitly appropriated to one particular order of society, not as priests, but as governors.

It will be understood in what sense I call baptism an act of government, if it be considered that it is, amongst other things, the admission of a new member into the Christian society, and that, as such, it belongs properly to those who have au-

thority given to them in that society; for where is the private individual, who is allowed at his own choice to admit strangers to the rights of citizenship in the commonwealth? It does not follow that baptism is nothing more than an act of government; but because it is clearly this, whatever it may be besides, therefore it is at least possible that when the power of administering it is ascribed exclusively to one particular order in the church, there should be in this no allowance of any priestly power, but simply of the power of the magistrates or rulers of a society. We shall see, by and by, that this distinction is not unimportant.

Farther; it may appear on examination, that the very power of the keys itself, when rightly understood, implies nothing of a priesthood, but only the legitimate power of government.

It will be asked, however, what is the right understanding of this well-known expression, "The power of the keys?" And the answer must not be given lightly; for we are here concerned not with the careless words of fallible men, but with a solemn promise to the Church, made at three several times by Christ our Lord. Undoubtedly, therefore, the power of the keys means something, and that meaning cannot be a matter of indifference.

The promise was made by our Lord on three several occasions: viz.

1st. To St. Peter, apparently as a reward to that Apostle for his confessing his Master to be the Christ^a.

2nd. To the whole body or church of Christians, as a sanction to their sentence, when he had ordered that all quarrels between Christian and Christian should in the last resort be referred to the decision of the church^b.

3rd. To the eleven Apostles, when our Lord, after his resurrection, was giving them their commission to found and govern his Church^c.

In the first two of these promises the words are identical, and they are figurative. They run, "Whatsoever thou" (or 'ye') "shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou" (or 'ye') "shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." In the third the words are different, although the sense is generally supposed to be nearly the same. They are, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

"To bind and to loose" are metaphors certainly, but metaphors easy to be understood. They express a legislative and a judicial power. To bind, legislatively, is to impose a general obligation; to say that a thing ought to be done or ought not to be done: to bind men's consciences either to the

^a St. Matthew, xvi. 19.

^b St. Matthew, xviii. 18.

^c St. John, xx. 23.

doing of it, or to the abstaining from it. Thus, St. Paul speaks of a woman being bound so long as her husband lives; but of being free to marry whom she will, if her husband be dead. In the one case there was a binding of the conscience, in the other a loosing of it. And this is one part of the sense of the expression. Again; to bind judicially, is to impose a particular obligation on an individual, to oblige him to do or to suffer certain things for the sake of justice, which, if left to himself, he would not choose to do or suffer. And to loose judicially, is to pronounce a man free from any such obligation; to declare that justice does not require of him, in this particular case, to do or to suffer any thing for its satisfaction. Justice has no claim upon him,—she leaves him free. This is the second part of the expression.

It is to this second part, to the binding and loosing judicially, that the third promise of our Lord belongs. For the retaining and remitting of sins is clearly a judicial power: the retaining of sin is the pronouncing that a man is bound to do or suffer something as a satisfaction for it; the remitting of sin is the pronouncing that justice has no hold upon him, that he is acquitted, loosed, freed from all her demands on him.

But such a legislative and judicial power is a power of government; government in fact consisting mainly of these two great powers, the legisla-

tive and judicial. We do not as yet find any thing then in the power of the keys that bears any relation to priesthood, according to that definition of it which was given above—that it is an interposition between God and man supposed to be necessary to our acceptance with God, yet without being necessary or beneficial to us morally. And this is strictly the idea of priestly absolution. For whether it be said that he who is absolved is forgiven by God, or that he who is not absolved is not forgiven by God; there is in either case an act made essential or beneficial to our salvation, which yet makes us morally neither the better nor the worse. Absolution then so understood is a proper act of priesthood. But does such a power of absolution form any part of the Christian power of the keys?

It has been contended that it does, and our Lord's words to his Apostles are appealed to as the proof of this:—"Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Now here there are two questions:—First, What was the meaning of our Lord's promise as addressed to the Apostles? Secondly, How much of this meaning was intended to apply to any except the Apostles?

1st. It is allowed that this promise conferred on the Apostles a judicial power, as distinct from a legislative one; it gave them authority

to decide on individual cases; to pronounce that such or such a man was forgiven, in some sense or other; and that such or such a man was not forgiven. But the great question is, whether this power can be shown to be distinct from a power of government; that is, were the forgiveness or refusal of forgiveness here spoken of distinct from some outward sentence passed upon a man with reference to the Christian society; and were they grounded upon any thing more than actions cognizable by human perception, and therefore the fit objects of human reward or censure. For the peculiarity of a priestly power consists in this: that its sentence, in its essence, is not outward but inward; affecting a man not in his relations to the Christian society, but in his relations towards God, and grounded therefore upon a knowledge of more than actions cognizable by human perception; namely, of the thoughts and motives of the heart. For there is no doubt that our state towards God depends mainly on the state of our hearts, so that a judgment of the former cannot be passed without a knowledge of the latter.

We must separate, then, all such judicial acts as the declaration of forgiveness implied in the admission of new converts to baptism; and as the declaration of the retaining of sins implied in the striking of Elymas with blindness, in the visiting

the incestuous Corinthian with some bodily punishment, in excommunication, and in the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira. In all these cases there was an outward sentence, affecting men outwardly and visibly in their earthly condition; and this sentence was grounded on some outward action; in baptism for instance, on the *profession* of repentance and faith; and in the other instances on acts of a similar character to those which human law habitually punishes.

But can we find, over and above such instances as these, any cases in which the Apostles, without any visible or outward sentence, passed a judgment simply on the state of an individual towards God; and a judgment founded, not on outward and tangible acts, but on a knowledge of the sincerity or insincerity of his feelings? We read of no such cases; but we find such language used respecting Christ's judgment, and God's knowledge of the thoughts of the heart, as is agreeable to our common impression, that of the state of a man's heart with respect to God, God is the only judge^a.

It may seem that in one instance an Apostle did possess a power of reading the heart, when Paul is said to have perceived that the cripple who stedfastly listened to his speech at Lystra,

^a [1 Sam. xvi. 7. 1 Kings, viii. 39. Jerem. xvii. 9, 10. St. Luke, xvi. 15. 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5.]

“had faith to be healed.” It is not certain, however, that there was in this case any reading of the heart; “the stedfast listening,” the expression of deep interest in Paul’s words manifested in the whole countenance and attitude of the hearer, were an evidence not to be mistaken that he was thoroughly convinced by what he heard. But admitting for a moment that the Apostle’s was a deeper judgment than he could have formed by his mere natural faculties; yet in this case we have God’s warrant that he had judged rightly, inasmuch as the man’s faith was proved by his being cured of his lameness at Paul’s word. So that even if there was a sentence grounded on such things as man cannot naturally discern, yet the proof was given that the judgment was right, by its being followed by an outward consequence, greater than man alone could have effected.

2nd. So much of the power given by our Lord to his Apostles, as depended on their possessing a greater than human knowledge, would not, of course, be given to those who do not possess that knowledge. And if any man says that he does possess such knowledge, and if the claim does not prove itself, as in prophecy or in telling to a man what was in his thoughts, then we may call upon him for some sign that he does possess it. If he says positively that such a man has his sins forgiven in the sight of God, then he should tell him

as St. Paul did, to stand upright on his feet, or should relieve him from some trouble or infirmity by which he is manifestly afflicted. If he says as positively that such and such a man is not forgiven, then let him also show his power of delivering such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord.

It does not appear that the Apostles ever exercised what was properly a priestly power. Admitting however, for the moment, that they had exercised it, yet as such a power is of an extraordinary character, and requires more than the ordinary attributes of human nature to exercise it properly; and as the Apostles were endowed with certain extraordinary gifts, such as are not possessed by men in general; we should be justified in assuming some connexion between their power and their gifts, and might safely conclude that those who had not the latter could not enjoy the former. But the case is stronger, now that it cannot be shown that even the Apostles possessed a priestly power. If such a power was too great even for them to wield, how can it be supposed that others can wield it, on whom none of their extraordinary qualifications have descended?

The nearest approach to a priestly power recognised in the New Testament is in the effects of intercessory prayer; for if we pray for grace

for our brother, and God grants our prayer, we seem to be in some sort the channel of God's mercy to him, without producing any effect upon him morally; and this was laid down to be the characteristic of a priestly power as distinct from a ministry or cure of souls, which acts on those committed to its charge through moral means.

First, however, the virtue of intercessory prayer is in itself widely different from the pretended priestly power to give a virtue to the sacraments. The peculiarly unchristian part of this latter claim is this, that it makes a human mediator necessary to those who are actually acknowledging, trusting in, and earnestly desiring to enjoy the fruits of Christ's mediation; whereas no one would say that our own prayers, offered up according to Christ's Spirit, and in Christ's name, will not be accepted, unless others will also pray for us. The prayers of others in our behalf are not made the condition on which alone our own earnest prayers shall be accepted.

Intercessory prayer in its highest cases supposes that a man has not the grace of repentance and faith; that he is not at present morally in a state of acceptance with God. It is the very worst part of his condition, that he will not pray for himself. Under these circumstances that God should have graciously left a way open by which his friends may labour with hope in his behalf; that over and

above the secret and inscrutable ways by which he, according to his own pleasure, sometimes touches the heart of the impenitent sinner, he should have also revealed one way in which the love of his friends may work for him; this would be a very different thing from declaring that a man's own faith, and love, and prayers, shall be of no use unless other men shall also interpose for him. It is one thing to enable human charity to be serviceable to him who, if left to himself, would be lost; and another to allow human presumption to declare its aid necessary to him, who having received Christ's grace through faith, is already saved.

But there is yet another great difference which effectually separates the intercessory prayer of Christians from the mediation of a priesthood; namely, that its efficacy is not limited, or given especially, to the prayers of any one order of men: it is not the priest who is to pray for the people, but the ministers and the people who are to pray for each other; nay a peculiar stress is laid on the efficacy of the united prayers of many; so that we may assume that the prayers of the people are at least as important to the minister, as his prayers are to them.

Here, however, we shall be referred to that well-known passage in the epistle of St. James, which directs the sick to call in the elders of the

church, and speaks of the elders praying over them and anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord, and of their being raised up by virtue of this prayer. Now here again a manifest distinction must be taken, between those elders who possessed the gift of healing, and others who have it not; it cannot be maintained that with regard to the especial subject there spoken of, the recovery, namely, of a sick person, a general conclusion follows as to the peculiar efficacy of the prayers of presbyters in all times, because they were peculiarly efficacious when combined with the gift of healing. But I should be unwilling to limit the words of the Apostle entirely to bodily cures, or to the circumstances of the early church. I would allow, most readily, that they are of general and perpetual application, but their meaning makes against any priestly power in the clergy, rather than establishes it.

The object of the passage is to encourage the exercise of those mutual spiritual aids rendered by Christians to each other, which are one of the great objects and privileges of the institution of the Church. The body was to sympathize with its several members. If a man was in trouble, he was to pray; if in joy, to sing hymns: in neither case is the Apostle speaking of private prayer or private singing; but of those of the Christian congregation: there every individual Christian could

find the best relief for his sorrows, and the liveliest sympathy in his joy. St. Paul's command, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep," applies to this same sympathy, which the prayers and hymns of the church services were a constant means of expressing. But if a man were sick and could not go to the congregation, still he was not to lose the benefit of his Christian communion with them; he might then ask them to come to him; and as the whole congregation could not thus be summoned, the elders were to go as its representatives, and their prayers were to take the place of the prayers of the whole church. Care, however, is taken to show that the virtue of their prayers arises not from their being priests, but from their being Christians, and standing in the place of the whole church. For these words immediately follow; "confess therefore to one another your sins, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed; there is much virtue in a just man's prayer, when it is offered earnestly." Now this most divine system of a living church, in which all were to aid each other, in which each man might open his heart to his neighbour, and receive the help of his prayers, and in which each man's earnest prayer, offered in Christ's name, had so high a promise of blessing annexed to it, has been most destroyed by that notion of a priesthood, which claiming that men

should confess their sins to the clergy, not as to their brethren, but as to God's vicegerents, and confining the promised blessing to the prayers of the clergy as priests, not as Christians, nor as the representatives of the whole church, has changed the sympathy of a Christian society into the dominion of a priesthood and the mingled carelessness and superstition of a laity.

St. John's language agrees with that of St. James: "If any man see his brother sinning a sin which is not unto death, he shall pray, and Christ shall give him life, for those who are not sinning unto death. There is a sin unto death;—it is not for that that I am bidding him to pray." Here the very same blessing which St. James speaks of as following the elder's prayers, is said by St. John to follow the prayer of any Christian:—a clear proof that the elders were sent for as the representatives of the church, and not as if their prayers possessed a peculiar virtue, because they stood as priests between God and the people.

Thus then we find much in Scripture which recognises high powers of government in the Christian church; but nothing which acknowledges a priesthood. The distinction is of immense importance, for from the covert intermixture of priesthood with government has followed the great corruption of the divine plan of the Christian church.

CHAPTER III.

THE chapter which I am now going to write is in truth superfluous. Nay, although its particular object were proved ever so fully, yet this would be a less gain than loss, if any were by the nature of the argument encouraged to believe that we are to seek for our knowledge of Christianity any where else but in the Scriptures. What we find there is a part of Christianity, whether recognised as such or no in after ages; what we do not find there is no part of Christianity, however early or however general may have been the attempts to interpolate it. If this be not so, we must change our religion and our Master: we can be no longer Christians, servants of Christ, instructed by him and his own Apostles; but Alexandrianists, Syrianists, Asianists, following the notions which happened to prevail in the Church according to the preponderance of particular local or temporary influences, and following as our master neither the wisdom of God, nor even the wisdom of men; but the opinions of a time and state of society,

whose inferiority in all other respects is acknowledged,—and the guidance of individuals, not one of whom approaches nearly to that greatness which in the case of the great Greek philosophers made an implicit veneration for their decisions in some degree excusable.

If it could be shown that the unanimous voice of men eminent alike for goodness and for wisdom, had from the earliest times insisted upon some doctrine or practice not taught or commanded in the New Testament as an essential part of Christianity; if it should appear that this doctrine or practice were in no way favourable to their own importance or interest; and if it could be shown, also, that it was not in accordance with the way of thinking prevalent in their age and country,—but could have commended itself to their minds by nothing but its intrinsic excellence,—then, indeed, the doctrine might be concluded to be reasonable, and the practice good: but the omission of all notice of them by our Lord and his Apostles would be a fact so unaccountable and so staggering, that the triumph of ecclesiastical tradition would be the destruction of all well grounded faith in the authenticity of our records of Christianity, nay it would involve in the most painful uncertainty the very truth of the Christian revelation. For if Christ and his Apostles omitted any essential part of Christianity; if their revelation

was not perfect; then the dispensation of the fulness of times must be sought for elsewhere: and the claim of Mohammedanism, that it is the perfecting of the earlier dispensations, the Jewish and Christian, ceases to be blasphemous. Or if it be said that the doctrine or practice in question were inculcated by Christ and his Apostles, although they are not noticed in the New Testament, then what is our security that other vital points have not been omitted in like manner in our epistles and gospels? And when we consider what the New Testament is; that it contains four detailed accounts of our Lord's life and teaching, one of which was written by his beloved disciple St. John; that it contains an account of the first propagation of Christianity by our Lord's Apostles; that it contains, farther, thirteen or fourteen epistles of St. Paul, written some to churches, some to individuals, and comprehending systematic views of what Christianity is; appeals innumerable to its motives, its hopes, and its consolations; exhortations innumerable to cling to its truths and to walk in its precepts, with specific mention of these truths and precepts;—when we consider, farther, that we have in the same Scriptures an epistle from St. James, the head of the church of Jerusalem, whose mind and views, humanly speaking, were least like those of St. Paul; and that we have epistles also from St. Peter and St. John,

two of our Lord's very chiefest Apostles, and that these epistles are addressed to Christians generally, and dwell on those points of Christian faith and life which it was most essential to bear in mind; then if all these writers, all these great Apostles, in these long and varied writings, have omitted with one accord themselves, and have represented our Lord as omitting, any essential doctrine or practice of Christianity, how can we believe that they were indeed partakers of that Holy Spirit which was to guide them into all truth? How can we think that they were really empowered by God to be the preachers and authoritative teachers of his revelation?

Or, thirdly, it may be said, that the New Testament refers only to the beginnings of the Gospel; that the new converts received, indeed, τὰ ἀναγκαϊότατα τῆς παιδείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ,—such truths as were most indispensable, and without which they could not have been Christians at all; but that the full development of the system of Christianity was reserved for a later season; that the Scriptures themselves imply this, inasmuch as, in the epistle to the Hebrews, a distinction is expressly drawn between the first principles of the doctrine of Christ and the going on unto perfection, and the writer of that epistle complains that they whom he was addressing were not yet fit for this more perfect truth. That in this manner the doctrine

of the Christian priesthood and of the mystic virtue of the sacraments is not, indeed, fully developed in the New Testament, but was taught by the Apostles at the very close of their career, and received by the Church as their last and most perfect instruction, which was to complete the revelation of Christianity.

It has pleased God that of the peculiar teaching of the great majority of the Apostles we should know nothing; we cannot say with certainty what they taught individually at any period of their lives. But we can say positively that the latest teaching of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John, contained in it no more perfect revelation concerning the priesthood and the sacraments than they had made known at the beginning of the gospel. St. Paul's second epistle to Timothy must surely be considered as containing his latest views of Christianity; and as being addressed to one who was himself a teacher, it must have contained those views fully; it cannot be pretended that St. Paul had any doctrine too esoterical to be communicated to Timothy. But his latest epistle, amidst many differences of expression from his earlier writings, such as the lapse of years brings to all men, contains in substance the very same view of Christianity which we find in the epistles to the Thessalonians. Paul's gospel is still Christ's resurrection, God's free salvation, Christ's coming to

judgment. He is still as averse as ever to strifes about words; he warns Timothy that the time will come when Christians shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. He refers him to his past doctrine ever since Timothy first knew him, not as to an imperfect system, to which he was now going to add some great truth hitherto suppressed, but as that very system which he earnestly wished to save from corruption and interpolation. This was Paul's language at a period when he declares that he had finished his course on earth, and had only to enter into his reward.

As we learn St. Paul's latest sentiments from his second epistle to Timothy, so we learn those of St. Peter from his second epistle general. He too speaks of himself in that epistle as leaving to the church his dying admonition, as telling them the things which they might have always in remembrance after he was gone. Does this epistle contain that great doctrine of the priesthood and sacraments which, when he wrote his first epistle, the Church was too weak to bear? In that first epistle, having used the expression "that baptism saved Christians," he hastens at once to explain his meaning, lest any should understand him superstitiously; and says that he does not mean by baptism's saving us, that the bodily washing with water saves; but the

answer of a good conscience towards God, when men in repentance and faith were admitted into the fellowship of Christ's redemption. His explanation is clearly intended to draw off our attention from the outward rite to the moral state of the person receiving it: it was the repentance and faith of the person baptized, which, through God's mercy in Christ, saved him; and not the outward rite of immersion in water. Now nothing is to be found in the second epistle which in any degree qualifies this: every word of his latest charge turns upon moral points; upon growth in all Christian graces, on improving to the utmost their knowledge of Christ. He speaks, indeed, of some who would soon introduce grievous heresies and corruptions of Christianity; but for himself he has nothing to add to his former teaching; he is only anxious that it should be remembered, and practically turned to account.

Lastly, Christ's beloved disciple; he who lived so long that some of the brethren supposed that he was never to die at all; he who in an especial manner connects the first age of the Church with the second;—do his epistles, written evidently late in his life,—does his revelation, which so emphatically bears the character of a final declaration of God's will,—contain this supposed perfect doctrine of the priesthood and the sacraments? Not one word of either. Written to those who had an

unction from the Holy One, and knew all things, to the Church of Christ, with no distinction of priest and layman, St. John's epistle contains no new commandment, but the same which the Church had received from the beginning: his gospel is Paul's gospel also; God's infinite love in Christ, Christ dying for us; faith working by love; holiness being the mark of God's people; sin the mark of false brethren. Of priest-hoods, of one body of men ministering grace to the rest through certain outward rites which, unless administered by them, lose their efficacy, St. John, like St. Peter and St. Paul, says nothing. Something, indeed, he does say of the spirit of priestcraft, in order to condemn it; there was one Diotrephes who loved to exercise authority, and to cast out of the Church those of God's people who were strangers to his particular portion of it; and reproved those who knew better the largeness of Christian charity. But Diotrephes, the true prototype of priestly and fanatical presumption, is condemned by Christ's beloved Apostle, as prating against him with malicious words; as disobeying by his bigotry the authority of the loving apostles of Christ Jesus.

The latest writings, then, of these three great Apostles—Paul, Peter, and John—contain no traces of any other or more mysterious doctrines than they had received from our Lord and taught

to their first converts at the beginning of the gospel. And the expressions already alluded to in the epistle to the Hebrews, like the whole of that epistle, are, in fact, directly opposed to the notion of a more mystical Christianity, which was to be the reward of a due improvement of the first principles of Christian knowledge already communicated. The "perfection" of which the writer speaks as opposed to the principles or the elementary doctrine of Christ, is an understanding that the law, its priesthood, and its sacrifices were no longer necessary, inasmuch as Christ, by his eternal priesthood and one sacrifice, had done effectually that work which they could but typically foreshadow. It is well known that the Jewish Christians still observed the ceremonial law; and the Apostles sanctioned this, not only to avoid unnecessary offence to the unbelieving Jews, but also because the converts themselves would have been shocked at the notion of renouncing it. St. Paul, however, and those who followed him, were well aware that this observance of the law was very apt to be coupled with a belief of its necessity in a spiritual point of view, and therefore they represent the full grown Christian as one who feels the unimportance of all Jewish ceremonies, and who places his whole reliance upon Christ. "Let us, as many as are perfect," says St. Paul to the Philippians, "be thus minded;" where his meaning is

exactly the same with that of the epistle to the Hebrews, where he speaks of going on unto perfection. So far, then, was the perfection of Christian doctrine from consisting in the belief in a human priesthood, and in the mystic virtue of outward ordinances, that it was the very opposite of this, and consisted in clearly understanding that Christ's death and resurrection had rendered all priesthoods, sacrifices, and ceremonies, for the time to come, unimportant. It was because this perfection was not generally attained to, because the minds of so many Christians could not embrace principles so pure, that the doctrine of the priesthood and the sacraments gradually made its way into the church, as the natural successor of Judaism. For when the Jewish temple and sacrifices were destroyed, those Christians who had till then regarded them as important parts of Christianity, were naturally led to substitute another priesthood and another sacrifice of the same sort in the place of those which they had lost: and as they had joined the Levitical priesthood with that of Christ, and the daily sacrifices of the law with his sacrifice, so afterwards, in the same spirit, they made a new priesthood out of the Christian ministry, and a new sacrifice out of the communion of the Lord's Supper.

It may be safely said, that whatever we find in

the New Testament, as to a gradual communication of Christian truth, relates to this one point : that the disciples were to be led on gently to a full sense of the unimportance of the ceremonies of the Jewish law. Christianity was given complete, as to its own truths, from the beginning of the gospel : but the absolute sufficiency of these truths, and the needlessness of any other system as joined with them, was to be learned only by degrees ; and, unhappily, it never was learned fully. The perfection of which the epistle to the Hebrews speaks as not having been yet reached by those to whom the author was writing, was, by the great mass of the Church, never reached at all. The errors of the Judaizers continued, and assumed a shape far more mischievous ; because the Judaism of the succession priesthood, and the sacrifice of the communion, did not, like the older Judaism, simply exist by the side of pure Christianity, but incorporated itself with Christianity, and destroyed Christian truths to substitute in the place of them its own falsehood.

Thus, then, as the Scriptures wholly disclaim these notions of a human priesthood, as the perfection of knowledge to which they would have us aspire consists in rejecting such notions wholly ; it is strictly, as I said, superfluous to inquire into the opinions of early Christian writers, because, if these upheld the doctrine of

the priesthood ever so strongly, it would but show that the state of mind of which the epistle to the Hebrews complains, was afterwards more universal and more remote from Christian perfection. But it is satisfactory to find that this was not so; that although the germs of the mischief may be here and there discernible, yet that the doctrine of the Apostles was in the main faithfully taught by those who, in point of time, came nearest to them; that it needed more than one generation to corrupt so deeply the perfect purity of Christian truth.

Our inquiry will not be a very long one. For when that favourite expression with some, "the voice of Christian antiquity," is analyzed, it appears that, besides the writers of the New Testament, the first century and a half of the Christian era produced no more than ten writers, or, if we include Justin Martyr, eleven. These were all whom Jerome could discover, although he professes to give a complete list of the Christian writers from the earliest times, and even swells it with the names of Josephus, Philo-Judæus, Justus of Tiberias, who was also a Jewish writer, and L. Seneca.

The ten writers of Jerome's list are the following: Barnabas, Hermas, Clemens of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, Quadratus, Arlstides, Agrippa, and Hegesippus. Of this number the

works of the five last have perished, with the exception of a few passages preserved in quotations by other writers. But Quadratus and Aristides were only known to Jerome himself as the authors of two apologies in behalf of Christianity, addressed to the emperor Hadrian; and Agrippa's works were an answer to the heretic Basilides, of which it is not certain that it was extant in the time of Jerome. Of Polycarp and Ignatius, Jerome knew no other works than those which we still possess under their names; that is, Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians, and the seven epistles of Ignatius: 1, to the Ephesians; 2, to the Magnesians; 3, to the Trallensians; 4, to the Romans; 5, to the Philadelphians; 6, to the Smyrnæans; and 7, to Polycarp. Barnabas, also, and Hermas were known to Jerome only by the Epistle of the former, and by the Shepherd of the latter; both of which we possess. And the only undisputed work of Clemens, his epistle to the Corinthians, is also still in existence. The only important remains of Christian antiquity which Jerome possessed, and which are lost to us, are therefore the Apologies of Quadratus and Aristides, the Ecclesiastical History of Hegesippus, and Papias's five books, entitled "A Setting Forth of the Words of the Lord." *Ἐκθεσις λόγων Κυρίου.*

It is not my present purpose to inquire into the genuineness of the epistle of Barnabas, or of the

other writings of the so-called Apostolical fathers. I am willing for the present to assume that they are genuine, because I wish to meet the advocates of the priesthood on their own ground; and I contend that their system can no more be derived from the reputed works of the earliest Christian writers, than from the Scriptures themselves. If there be no works remaining of the Christian writers of the first century and a half, it is idle to talk about a tradition running back to the very times of the Apostles; the links of the chain are wanting in the very most important part, and the wide gap between the Apostles and Justin Martyr must resist every attempt to connect the opinions of the end of the second century with the Christianity of the Apostolical age.

I. The epistle of Barnabas is directed mainly against the notions of the Judaizers. The writer is so earnest against the observance of the Jewish law by Christians, that he ascribes a figurative and spiritual meaning to all those passages in the Old Testament which enjoin the several ceremonies of the Jewish ritual. Even circumcision, he contends, meant the circumcision of the heart, and not the outward rite; and after stating an objection to this view of it, in the words of a supposed opponent, who observes, "that the Jews were circumcised as a seal of their covenant," he replies, "But the Syrians and Arabians, and the idol priests

generally, use circumcision. Are they, also, then partakers of God's covenants?" A writer who would so little admit outward ceremonies as an essential part of the Jewish religion, was not likely to regard them as essential in Christianity. There is, accordingly, not a single word about any Christian ceremonial, whether of temple, priesthood, or offering; he knows nothing of the Eucharist as the unbloody sacrifice of the new law, to be offered only by the new priesthood; he only knows of the sacrifice once offered by Christ, of the whole Church as the spiritual temple of God. It is true he speaks of baptism under the name of "water," and applies to it several passages in the Old Testament, which speak of "streams of water," "living springs," &c. And from these expressions, it might be supposed that he was laying a stress on the outward act of baptism. For instance, the following words might be quoted as identifying baptism with regeneration:—"We go down to the water full of sins and filthiness, and we come up with our hearts bringing forth fruit; having fear and hope towards Jesus through the Spirit." This, and other such passages serve admirably well, when quoted separately, to make it appear that Barnabas held the Judaizing notions of the mystical virtue of the sacraments: but when we compare his strong language, as to the utter

worthlessness of the outward act of circumcision, and as to the circumcision of the heart being the only thing intended by the commandment, it is quite clear that, by parity of reasoning, the whole importance of baptism in his eyes must have consisted in the real change of heart which it implied, and the change of life of which it was the beginning; and that the ceremony of baptizing with water was merely a symbol of the great and important change which a man underwent in passing from a state of heathenism to Christianity. In this sense, baptism, as synonymous with an admission to the benefits and promises of the Christian Church, could not be spoken of too highly; it was truly the turning point of a man's whole existence from evil to good. And in the time of Barnabas, when the real change involved in the act of baptism was so striking, and the superstitions connected with it had not as yet had full time to grow up, any one might speak of it as Barnabas has spoken, without suspecting that his words could be misinterpreted. St. Peter himself says, "Baptism does now save us;" and it seems to me rather an instance of God's abundant goodness, to hinder the Scriptures from giving any countenance to the Judaizing superstitions, than a necessary caution on the writer's part to save himself from misinterpretation, when he adds

expressly, “not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.”

It should be always remembered, that the superstition of the Judaizers consists not in their reverence for the sacraments, which Christ appointed as great instruments of good to his Church; but in their having drawn off men's attention from the important part both of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to that which is external: to regard God's grace not as conveyed by them morally, because the joining Christ's Church in the first instance, and the constantly refreshing our communion with it afterwards, are actions highly beneficial to our moral nature; but as conveyed by them after the manner of a charm, the virtue being communicated by the water and the bread and wine, in consequence of a virtue first communicated to them by certain words of consecration pronounced by a priest. It is the famous “*accedit verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum*,” which contains the essence of the unchristian and most mischievous view of the sacraments entertained by the Romish and Anglican popery. And, in order to show that the early Christian writers favour this notion, it is not enough to show that they speak strongly of the benefits of the sacraments; for in this the Scriptures and almost all true Christians would agree with them: but it must farther be made

evident that they lay the stress on the virtue communicated by the outward elements, after those elements have been first consecrated by certain formal words repeated by a priest. Unless they can be proved to hold this, we may interpret their language rather as agreeing with that of Christ and his apostles, than as countenancing the superstition of the Judaizers.

From the epistle of Barnabas, I pass to that of Clemens Romanus.

II. There is nothing in Clemens, either on the subject of Baptism or of the Lord's Supper, or of a priesthood. But there are one or two passages which have been often quoted as asserting what is called apostolical succession; and these, therefore, it will be proper to examine. As before, in the case of the epistle of Barnabas, I am assuming the genuineness of the epistle of Clemens, and also its freedom from interpolation.

It is difficult, unfortunately, notwithstanding the length of this work, to learn from it with any clearness the exact nature of the circumstances to which it refers. It complains, indeed, largely of the mischiefs of quarrelling and pride; but it does not state what was the occasion of quarrel, nor what were the views and objects of the party which disturbed the peace of the church. They are spoken of as "a few," *ὀλίγα πρόσωπα*; and they are blamed as "lifting themselves up

over Christ's flock," *ἐπαιρομένων ἐπὶ τὸ ποίμνιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, at the same time that they were disparaging the authority of the lawful elders of the Church. Some of the elders had been actually displaced, and for no fault of theirs; and those through whom they had been expelled had gained a great authority in their room. These last Clement exhorts to give up their power, to do the bidding of the congregation, *τὰ προστασσόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ πλήθους*, and to imitate the example of many worthy kings and rulers of the Gentiles, who had left their own countries, rather than be the occasion of contention or civil war.

All this is to us exceedingly vague; it reminds us something of the tyrants of the old Greek commonwealths, establishing themselves on the overthrow of the old aristocracies. It bears some resemblance to the picture drawn by St. Paul of his Judaizing opponents in this very church of Corinth, who depreciated or denied his authority, and trampled themselves upon the mass of the congregation with the utmost insolence^a. It would perfectly suit an attempt made on the part of one or two ambitious individuals to establish the despotism of a single bishop, instead of the mild authority of the whole body of elders: for certain it is that Clement, like St. Paul, recognises no one bishop, in the later sense of the term, as ruling

^a See II Corinth. xi. 20.

the church of Corinth; the government is vested in a certain number of bishops or elders, called indifferently by either name, who, together with the inferior ministers, *διάκονοι*, or in the language of the Athenian constitution, *ὑπήρεται*, constitute all the officers of the Christian society.

With this uncertainty as to the precise nature of the disturbance in the Corinthian church, we cannot tell with what extent or with what limits to understand the particular passage of Clement's epistle, which is supposed to uphold the doctrine of the so-called apostolical succession. He refers to the minute rules of the Jewish Church; to its division of offices, and its stated seasons and places of worship; and he infers from this, that each man in the Christian Church should keep his own station and order with equal strictness. The Apostles, he says, appointed everywhere the first bishops and deacons, *ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους*, in the several churches which they founded. They wished to obviate disputes about the government, and therefore they not only appointed the first bishops and deacons, but also appointed a succession, *ἐπινομήν*, that when the first bishops were dead, other tried men should succeed to their office. "Those, then," proceeds Clement, "who were appointed by the Apostles, or afterwards, (*μεταξυ*,) by other tried and approved men, (*ἐλλογίμων*,) with the consent of the whole church;

those who ministered unblamably to Christ's flock with humility, gently, and in no spirit of sordid gain, (*ἀβαναίστως*,) and whose worth has many times been attested by the whole Church,—these we think are not justly expelled from their ministry; for it will be no small sin to us, if they who unblamably and holily offered their gifts to God, be cast out from their bishoprics." Such is the famous passage in which Clement is supposed to maintain the indefeasible right of bishops appointed by apostolical succession to exercise government over the Church for ever.

It is manifest, in the first place, that Clement's words are not general and prospective, but had reference to a particular case actually before him. He was thinking of something present and special, and had evidently no thought of laying down a general law for all times and places. Now, I am very far from saying that the words of a wise man, on a particular case, cannot contain any truth of general application; of course they can, and generally do: but as he did not utter them as general, their bearing on any universal truth is indirect rather than direct; that is, we may conclude that he would have applied them generally, so far as the particular case before him was a faithful representative of all future cases; but if it differed in any remarkable points from future cases, then we

have no right to make them general; in other words, we have no right to make him draw the same conclusion, where the premises are manifestly different.

Now the premises in Clement's case lead justly enough, assuming them for the present to be true in fact, to his conclusion. Good elders, appointed by worthy men, who had themselves been appointed by the Apostles, appointed with the consent of the whole church, whose worth the whole church had often attested, and who had discharged their ministry unblamably, gently, and uncorruptly, ought not to be deprived of their office. I am not aware that the strongest opponent of priestly tyranny would refuse his hearty assent to this proposition of Clement.

But now, instead of Clement's own premises, let us substitute others. "Bad and foolish elders, appointed by others neither wiser nor better, which others derived their own appointment from no purer source,—proud and foolish elders, in whose appointment the whole church had had no voice at all, nor had ever attested their worth, but felt their evil,—elders who had discharged their office offensively, arrogantly, rapaciously,"—shall there be no power in the church to deprive such of their office, and to commit the power which they abuse, and have long abused, to other hands? Or, is

Clement's conclusion still to hold, although of the premises from which he derived it, there is not left in this new case a single one remaining?

It must not be denied, however, that a comparison which Clement uses in this part of his epistle, may seem to imply that he regarded the government of the Church as a thing fixed once for all, and not to be altered under any circumstances. He refers to the selection of the family of Aaron to hold the priest's office, as a parallel case to the appointment of the first bishops by the Apostles ; and as the priesthood remained in Aaron's family to the end of the Jewish dispensation, without any reference to the worthiness of the individuals of that family in any one generation, so it might be argued that, in Clement's notions, the personal worthiness or unworthiness of the individual bishops had nothing to do with the question ; their right to govern the Church was derived solely from their Apostolical succession.

Now if Clement had been arguing in the abstract against the right of deposing any bishop or elder, and had then referred to the law of the Jewish priesthood, there could have been no doubt as to his meaning. But this is precisely one of those points in which the particular occasion of his argument makes his meaning, as to the general applicability of his comparison, doubtful. If he felt that bishops or elders had been factiously and unjustly

deposed, when they had been appointed to their office either immediately by the Apostles, or at only one remove, by those who had themselves received their office from the Apostles, the deposition of such men so appointed could not but seem to him an interference with a divine authority; and he would have looked upon their power, so unjustly assailed, as resting on God's ordinance, as much as the exclusive possession of the priesthood by the family of Aaron.

But it is impossible to argue justly from this passage, that if Clement had lived fifteen or sixteen centuries later, and had seen the bishops of the Church in a wholly different position from that of the bishops of the church of Corinth, he would have equally maintained their indefeasibility, and considered the Levitical priesthood an exactly parallel case. For the continuance of the priesthood in the same family was not a consequence simply of the original divine appointment of Aaron, but followed from the universal notion of the eastern world, and of much of the western, that priest-hoods must be hereditary. God appointed Moses to be the prophet and ruler of his people, and Moses after him appointed Joshua; but the divine appointment went no farther, because the prophets' and judges' offices were not necessarily to depend upon succession, and the Israelites were not bound to choose for their judges the posterity of either

Moses or Joshua. Now the Christian ministry would undoubtedly resemble the judges and prophets of the Israelites rather than their priests ; and therefore an original divine appointment would not imply the necessity of a perpetual succession. The succession here would, as to its divine authority, die out naturally in the course of time, just as the Roman lawyers held that collateral consanguinity expired in the eighth generation ; it being impossible to suppose that the virtue of the original descent from a common ancestor could exist beyond that period. Thus, the elders appointed immediately, or at one or two removes, by the Apostles, might truly be said to hold their offices, like Joshua, by divine appointment ; and they might as truly be said to have been chosen by God, as Aaron was chosen to be the priest, rather than a man of any other family or any other tribe. And the reason why the succession was not to be perpetual in the case of the judge of Israel and the Christian bishops was this, that unless each generation was as highly gifted by God as Moses and Joshua, or as the Christian Apostles, the wisdom of their original choice of successors would be impaired continually by fresh mixtures of human folly or passion ; so that, as in the case of collateral consanguinity, all its virtue must necessarily be lost after the lapse of a certain interval of time. This is the plain analogy and reason which makes it

probable that Clement would not have considered any bishops of the Church, after the lapse of a century, to be the successors of the Apostles, except so far as they resembled them in their lives and doctrine.

Nothing is less satisfactory than an argumentum ad hominem; and therefore I have chosen to consider this passage of Clement with a view simply to the truth of the case, and not merely to the silencing or embarrassing an adversary. Otherwise it is most true that the actual episcopacy of the Christian Church, for many centuries, can derive no support from the epistle of Clement. An aristocracy and a monarchy are not so precisely identical that the government of a single bishop can claim to be of divine authority, because the Apostles appointed in each church a certain number of bishops or elders. Nor can it be shown that if the ordination by bishops, one or more, be necessary, the consent of the whole church, which was no less a part of the primitive appointments, may be laid aside as a thing wholly indifferent. But it is a poor triumph merely to expose an opponent's inconsistencies: it is far better to show simply, that Clement's words — 1st, grew out of a particular occasion; 2nd, that the bishops to whose deposition he objected were good men, who had discharged their office well, and who had been appointed with the consent of the whole church; 3rd, that they were really

and *bonâ fide* the Apostles' successors, being no farther removed from them than the virtue of the Apostles' original choice might fairly be supposed to reach; 4th, that, the virtue of that choice necessarily dying out in time, it can never be proved that he who upheld its authority when it really existed, would therefore imagine it to exist when it was really lost; and 5th, that the cases of Moses and Joshua, and the essential difference between a priesthood and an office of prophet or ruler, make it clear that indefeasible succession does not flow from an original divine appointment in the latter case, because it accompanied it in the former.

Finally, it must be remembered that Clement speaks of the Christian ministers as bishops and elders, not as priests. It is not a little curious that, just at that period when the notion of original Apostolical appointment could no longer be applied to make out a virtual succession for the Christian ministers as prophets or rulers, their office began to be represented as a priesthood; that so the succession, which was inapplicable to them in their real character, might be claimed for them under this new and unchristian title.

III. The "Shepherd" of Hermas contains no mention of the Lord's Supper, nor of a priesthood, nor of a succession of ministers, nor of a mystical virtue communicated to the elements in the sacra-

ments by a certain form of words. Baptism, as the admission into the Christian Church, and as equivalent to the obtaining a knowledge of Christ, is indeed strongly insisted on in a remarkable passage, in which Hermas says that the Apostles after their deaths went down into the place of the dead, and preached there to the good men of former ages, and taught them the name of the Lord Jesus, and baptized them ; and that then, having received the seal of the Son of God, they arose perfect and fit for God's kingdom. "For," says Hermas, "they had died full of righteousness, and in a state of great purity, only they had not received this seal." I am far from saying that there is not some superstition involved in this ; but still the notion is, that the knowledge of the name of Christ was necessary, the seal of which is baptism: the stress is laid on the knowing Christ, and belonging to his Church, not on the mere outward rite of baptizing by water.

IV. The pure and simple epistle of Polycarp is as free from all taint of the corrupt doctrine of a priesthood, and the mystical virtue of the sacraments, as those of the Apostles themselves. He dwells on the relative duties of the several members of the Christian Church, and calls upon the younger men to abstain from all evil lusts, and to be subject to their elders and deacons as unto God and Christ. So St. Paul had desired slaves to obey

their masters, and wives to be subject to their own husbands, as unto the Lord. But this is very different from the exaggerated language of Ignatius, and the pretended Apostolical constitutions; and the obedience to the elders and deacons is clearly connected, in Polycarp's mind, with obedience to the law of Christ which they taught, as opposed to the evil lusts from which he wishes all Christian people to turn aside.

V. The epistle of Ignatius to the Romans, assuming as before its genuineness, and not entering into the question whether the longer or the shorter version of it be the original, contains nothing that bears directly on our present subject. One passage, however, may be noticed, as showing that Ignatius understood aright the language of our Lord recorded in St. John vi., respecting the eating his flesh, and the drinking his blood. "I have no pleasure," says Ignatius, "in corruptible food, nor in this life's pleasures: my wish is for the bread of God, the bread of heaven, the bread of life, that is, the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became afterwards of the seed of David and of Abraham. And the drink which I desire is his blood, which is love incorruptible and life eternal."

Now it should be remembered that Ignatius, in the whole of this epistle, is breathing an earnest desire for martyrdom. He is impatient to arrive

at Rome, that he may be torn to pieces by the wild beasts, and so may be for ever with Christ. It is impossible, then, that he can have thought of the communion of the Lord's Supper, when he speaks of the body and blood of Christ: he speaks rather of that perfect communion with Christ in heaven, of which the Lord's Supper was intended, amongst other things, to be the symbol.

It has been one of the most pernicious of all corruptions of Scripture, to understand certain passages as referring to the sacraments, which refer really to those things of which the sacraments are the signs. They are therefore coordinate with the sacraments, pointing in word, as the sacraments do in emblematic action, to the same reality; but not subordinate to the sacraments, nor by any means pointing to them as to the reality, which is something distinct from them and above them.

When our Lord declares, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," it is evident that here is the self-same truth contemplated which our Lord had also in view when he said, "Take, eat, this is my body:" and, "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." There is the self-same truth

contemplated, namely, that the closest possible communion of the soul with Christ, and the making him, in all his various relations of Prophet, King, Saviour, and Lord, the soul's daily food, was essential to man's salvation. This great truth our Lord expressed, according to his usual manner, in figurative words; he expressed it also in figurative action. He not only said, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;" but he embodied the words in action; he commanded us to eat as it were his flesh, and to drink his blood, in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. But to suppose that the stress was laid on the literal eating of the bread and drinking of the cup, that by that figurative act the great moral reality which it imaged forth symbolically would be ipso facto attained, is a misrepresentation precisely of the same kind as that which he so strongly condemns in his disciples, when they understood his words, to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, as a charge to beware literally of a particular sort of bread.

Thus again, the summary of the tenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, as given in our English Bibles, runs thus: "The Jews' sacraments types of ours." Here is the self-same error, of making the outward rites or facts of the Jewish religion *subordinate* to the outward rites of ours,

instead of regarding them both as *coordinate with one another*, and *subordinate* to some spiritual reality, of which both alike are but signs. In the passage referred to, St. Paul is showing that outward rites are no security for the existence of the real thing which they typify. Christians have been baptized with water, as an introduction into Christ's service; the Israelites passed through water also, as an introduction to their becoming God's people and receiving his law. Christians eat bread and drink wine, in token of their being united to their Lord and Saviour; and so the Israelites ate manna and drank of the rock, that manna and rock representing Christ their Lord, who was with them on all their way, just as the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper represent him now. But Israel, notwithstanding these outward tokens of their belonging to God and depending on him, sinned and fell; and notwithstanding our outward tokens, the same may be our case if we are not watchful. It is altering the whole scope of the passage to say that it represents the Jews' sacraments as types of ours; as if our sacraments, any more than theirs, were necessarily or in themselves a reality. The drift of the passage is not to magnify the sacraments, but to prevent us from superstitiously trusting to them. The Jews had their sacraments, as we have

ours, and both are types of the same thing; but the type in their case did not prevent them from forfeiting the substance, neither will it in ours.

So again, when St. John records so earnestly his beholding the blood and water flowing out from Christ's side, and when in his epistle, in manifest allusion to the same thing, he says, "This is he who came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood:" it makes the whole difference between Christianity and the great corruption of it, whether we understand these words as *coordinate with* Baptism and the Lord's Supper, or as *subordinate to* them; whether we say that they refer to the two sacraments, or that they refer to those great truths which the two sacraments also were designed to image forth in emblematic action; that repentance towards God, and faith in the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, are the sum and substance of Christianity.

Finally, the memorable words of our Lord himself to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," contain, perhaps, the same figure in words that Baptism contains in action, although even this is not certain, but are not meant to refer to the outward rite of Baptism as the thing *indispensable*. They are coordinate with Baptism, it may be, but not subordinate to it.

The same obvious reason which led the Jews, in common with many other people, to adopt the rite of washing the body as symbolical of the washing or cleansing of the soul from sin, led our Lord to express this cleansing of the soul by the term "water." A man must repent of his past evil life, and receive the grace of the Holy Spirit to enable him for the future to lead a new life, before he can enter into the kingdom of heaven. And if I am asked why I do not take the word "water" literally, according to Hooker's canon of criticism, when he says that "in the interpretation of Holy Scripture, that sense which is nearest the letter is commonly the safest," I answer, that such a canon, as applied to a collection of works, so different in point of style as those of the Scriptures, is at once ridiculous. In the simple narratives of the historical books, Hooker's rule will hold; in the prophetical and poetical books, it would be the very worst rule that we could follow. Now, our Lord's discourses, as recorded by St. John, are eminently parabolical; his language, both when speaking to the Jews and to his own disciples, is continually figurative. Hence the mingled surprise and pleasure of his disciples, when, towards the close of his last conversation with them, he dropped his usual style, and expressed himself without any figure. "Lo! now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb."

He spake of water to the woman of Samaria, and she, adopting Hooker's rule, understood him literally: "Lord, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." Was this, indeed, the true sense of his words; or was it so utterly mistaken as to lead to the extreme of folly and profaneness? And yet, some think, that to interpret in a similar manner his words to Nicodemus is neither foolish nor profane, but rather that to interpret them otherwise is to explain away the words of Scripture! Explaining away the words of Scripture! when we make them refer to something spiritual and not bodily; to a reality, not to a symbol; to a moral act, not to a ceremony!

But why should we scruple to understand our Lord's words of water, literally, when we know that he did on one occasion tell a blind man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam; and that the man went, and washed, and came seeing? This, too, is one of Hooker's comparisons, in that same fifth book of his Ecclesiastical Polity from which so many unwise and unfair arguments have been quoted as the words of impartiality and wisdom. Is it in the slightest degree a parallel case, that because a bodily application was prescribed as a cure for a bodily disease, it should therefore cure a disease of the soul? It is idle to say that we do not understand the laws of body and spirit, and

that God can affect both our bodies and spirits by whatever kind of instruments he chooses. The argument from human ignorance, most just and useful within certain limits, is by fanatics often used so awkwardly as to lead to the conclusions of the wildest scepticism. It is true, that we understand very little of the laws of body and spirit, still the very notions of body and spirit imply a wide difference between them; and so far as we do know or understand of either, our knowledge is derived from different sciences, and we find them to be subjected to different laws. If there is no truth in all this; if we do not know enough to warrant us in saying that wisdom is not to be gained by bodily exercise, nor charity by eating any particular kind of food, then we have no grounds for knowing or believing any thing; least of all can we think that we are living in the world of the God of truth and love, if we have no grasp upon truth whatsoever, and have no means by which we may reasonably assure ourselves even that God is.

But, not to wander into any more remote inquiry, it is sufficient for the present to say that the Scriptures fully recognise the authority of what may be called our common-sense notions of good and evil, of reasonableness and absurdity. And when fanaticism, striving to render all truth uncertain, that so its own falsehoods may have the better chance of being received, and pushing

to extravagance the famous sentiment of Pascal, "*La raison confond les dogmatistes,*" would endeavour to persuade us, that we can have no sure reliance either on the evidence of our senses or of our reason, that we do not know what is or what is not; our answer will be, that our convictions do not rest on any fond presumption as to our own power of discerning truth, but on our faith that God will not suffer us to be deceived by trusting to his appointed witnesses. Truth in itself we have, it may be, no power to grasp: it may be possible, if you will, that in another state of being, the surest conclusions of our senses and of our reason may be found to have been abstractedly erroneous. But in the meanwhile, in this our present state of being, they are true to us; they are the language to which God has adapted our present nature. By distrusting it, we shall disobey him and be lost in endless error; by believing it, we shall resign ourselves to his guidance, and shall attain, if not truth in itself, yet that only image of truth of which we are capable here, and by which alone we can be made capable of arriving at real truth hereafter. It is not rationalism, then, but reason resting on faith, which assures us of the utter incapability of any outward bodily action to produce in us an inward spiritual effect.

Sect. 1. Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians.

—In this epistle, we find a marked distinction between the bishop or superintendent, *ἐπίσκοπος*, and *πρεσβύτεριον*, or the body of elders; whereas in Clement's epistle, as well as in those of St. Paul, *ἐπίσκοπος* and *πρεσβύτερος* are synonymous terms. There are also several passages, enjoining obedience to the bishop and to the body of elders; and in one place Ignatius says, "Ye should regard your bishop as the Lord himself."^a But our Lord had said to his disciples, "He that receiveth you receiveth me;" and St. Paul had said, even with regard to the Heathen magistracies, "Whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." St. Paul also, as we have seen, enjoins Christians no less earnestly to obey those who were set over them; and that Christianity recognises a power of government in the Church, and requires of all individual Christians that they should be obedient to those invested with this government, we have already shown at large. But government is not priesthood, and neither these passages of Ignatius, nor those quoted before from St. Paul, contain one word to show that the bishops and elders of the Christian Church were priests as well as rulers.

It may be worth our while, however, to see what it was which induced Ignatius thus strongly to urge the duty of obedience to the bishop and the

^a [St. Ignat. ad Ephes. vi.]

elders ; because, if we understand this rightly, we shall find much excuse, at any rate, for certain strong expressions, which otherwise, taken apart from the context, and as meant merely to convey a high notion of the episcopal dignity, breathe a language very different from that of St. Peter and St. Paul. Every great reform which has taken place in human society has contained, among its nominal advocates, men who are morally the extreme opposites of each other ; some being the very best and noblest of their kind, and others the vilest. And it is these last who explain the otherwise monstrous fact, that among the opponents of every reform, there are to be found also, along with the lowest and most wicked of mankind, some few of the loftiest and the purest ; men who look at the evil supporters of the reform, and for their sakes dread it and abhor it. Now even Christianity itself shared this common lot of all great moral changes ; perfect as it was in itself, its nominal adherents were often neither wise nor good, but took part with it for its negative side, not for its positive : advocating it, so far as it destroyed what was already in existence, but having no sympathy with that better state of things which it proposed to set up in the room of the old. For when the Church began to show its wide range of action, and its singular efficacy, all who longed to see the existing system overthrown, rallied them-

selves round its assailant. Here, they thought, was a power which they could use for the accomplishment of their purpose ; when this should have first cleared the ground of the thickets which encumbered it, it would be for them to sow in the vacant soil their own favourite seed.

Now let any one, who knows what the Roman empire was in the first century of the Christian era, imagine to himself the monstrous forms of opinion and practice which a state of society so diseased could not fail to engender. All varieties of ancient and foreign superstition existed, together with the worst extremity of unprincipled scepticism ; while in practice the unquelled barbarism of the ruder provinces, and the selfish cruelty fostered by long and bloody civil wars, had provided a fearful mass of the fiercer passions ; and the unrestrained dissoluteness of a thoroughly corrupt society was a source no less abundant of every thing most shameless in sensuality. These seemingly incongruous evils, superstition and scepticism, ferocity and sensual profligacy, when from any particular circumstances they turned against the monster society which had bred them, and began to seek its destruction, often sheltered themselves under the name of Christianity, and were the heresies of the first age of the Christian Church.

That this was so would be, I think, sufficiently

proved by that well-known passage of Tacitus in which he describes the Christians as “per flagitia invisos,” and their system as one amongst things “atrocia et pudenda.”^a We know full well that Tacitus would not have applied such language to true Christians, and to true Christianity. We know that no wise and good heathen ever did apply such terms to either. But Tacitus’s testimony, and the very fact itself that the Christian name was generally odious, as connected with all manner of wickedness, are quite sufficient to prove that there were nominal Christians, whose rites and whose practices were at once licentious and dangerous to public order; who formed a secret society, fraught with mischief to the morals of individuals, no less than to the tranquillity of the state.

We are not left, however, to the mere testimony of Tacitus; the highest Christian authorities confirm the same thing. These combined features, sensual profligacy and lawless turbulence, appear exactly in the portraits of the heretical Christians drawn by St. Jude, and by St. Peter in his second epistle. Nor does the disputed genuineness of these two writings affect the question, for whether written by Apostles or no, it has never been doubted that they are the works of Christians in the first century; and that is sufficient for our purpose. The account given by Eusebius of the gross licen-

^a [Tac. Ann. xv. 44.]

tiousness of the Nicolaitans, agreeing with the strong language used concerning them in the Revelation, is another evidence to the same effect. I think also that the same thing is implied in the first epistle of St. Peter. Twice in that epistle he admits that the heathens spoke against Christians as evil doers; and he by no means denies altogether the truth of the charge, but rather urges those to whom he was writing to show that in their case it was false. His question, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye become (γένησθε) followers of that which is good?" and his saying, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evil doer,"^a appear to show that a portion at least of the sufferings of persons calling themselves Christians, had been really the just consequence of their crimes: and it is remarkable that here, too, the command "to abstain from fleshly lusts," is followed immediately by the command "to obey the laws and government;"^b as if the Apostle was regarding the very same characters who are described in his second epistle,—men at once licentious and anarchical.

In St. Paul's epistles, we find no less frequent indication that there existed many within the Church, whose principles and lives were altogether unchristian. The well-known passage in 2 Timothy iii. 1—8, refers, indeed, rather to a time imme-

^a [1 St. Peter, iii. 13; iv. 15.] ^b [Ibid. ii. 11. 13.]

diately following than to one past or present; still it was verified before the close of the first century. But the union of superstition and profligacy is described as a thing actually existing in the Church in the epistle to the Philippians, iii. 18, 19, and again in the epistle to the Galatians, vi. 12, 13; and it appears above all in the Judaizers, so often referred to in the epistles to the Corinthians. It is evident, too, from the peculiar language twice used in declaring the sinfulness of licentious pleasure, "Be not deceived,"—"He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man but God,"^a that there were some who would not listen to the Apostle in this matter, and who tried to persuade their fellow Christians that he was imposing on them a yoke needlessly rigid. Finally, the corrupters of true Christianity, whom Titus was sent to Crete to check, were vain talkers and deceivers, giving heed to Jewish fables and human traditions, and at the same time denying God in their lives, and being "abominable," (*βδελυκτοί*), "and to every good work reprobate," (*ἀδόκιμοι*),—"of no account and worthless."^b

These passages might be greatly multiplied, but what has already been quoted is sufficient for our purpose. A great point is gained, when we understand that the heresies condemned by the Apostles

^a 1 Corinthians, vi. 9; 1 Thessalonians, iv. 8.

^b [Titus, i. 10—16.]

were not mere erroneous opinions on some theoretical truth, but absolute perversions of Christian holiness; that they were not so much false as wicked. And further, where there was a false opinion in the heresy, it was of so monstrous a character, and so directly connected with profligacy of life, that it admits of no comparison with the so-called heresies of later ages. What should we think of men professing themselves to be Christians, and yet maintaining, as did the Docetæ, that Christ never really died or really rose, or asserting that the resurrection was past already; that is, that in the sense of a rising from the grave to eternal life there was no resurrection at all?

These opinions and principles, and this practice, existed in the early Church, in open defiance of the authority of the Apostles. In the Arian controversy, and in all others which have since arisen among Christians, the question has turned upon the true interpretation of the Apostle's words; but both parties have alike acknowledged that what the Apostles taught was to be received as the undoubted rule of faith and of action. Not so, however, the real heretics of the first century. St. Paul is continually arguing against adversaries, with whom his bare authority, it is evident, would have weighed nothing. How strong is his expression to Timothy, "All they that are in Asia are turned

away from me :"^a they have followed another view of Christianity as better than mine. And again, in matters of government, we see that Diotrephes, a man evidently of no mean rank in the Church, openly set at nought the authority of St. John^b. Thus it appears that we were in danger, humanly speaking, of having a Christian Church, a society of men baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, who yet did not acknowledge the authority of Christ's Apostles, and who believed and practised things most opposite to the principles and revelations of true Christianity.

It was therefore no vain superstition, and no wish to establish a priestly dominion, which led Ignatius to insist strongly on agreement with and obedience to the bishop, or which had induced Clement to press the importance of not displacing those elders who had been appointed directly or at one remove by the Apostles themselves. And the view here taken will also account for the otherwise irrelevant language which accompanies such exhortations to obedience. It explains why Polycarp should speak of being subject to the elders and deacons in close connexion with his charge to abstain from fleshly lusts. *Καλὸν γὰρ τὸ ἀνακύπτεισθαι ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ὅτι πᾶσα ἐπιθυμία κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος στρατεύεται . . . Διὸ δέον ἀπέχεσθαι ἀπὸ πάντων τούτων, ὑποτασσόμενους τοῖς πρεσβυτέ-*

^a [2 Tim. i. 15.]

^b [3 John, 9.]

ροῖς καὶ διακόνοις, ὡς Θεῷ καὶ Χριστῷ^a. Compare our Lord's words with regard to the Scribes and Pharisees:—"The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do."^b That is, "they are teachers of a true revelation from God, and whatever they bid you observe in their teaching, that do, without regard to the bad characters of those who so teach you." That our Lord directed obedience to them only so far as they taught the commandments of Moses, is clear from this, that he did not obey them himself in those usages which they had engrafted on the law of Moses by their own sole authority. And so Polycarp's command to the young Christians to be subject to their elders and deacons, and to abstain from fleshly lusts, has a direct reference to them as teachers of genuine Christianity, which condemned such indulgences, in opposition to many heretical teachers, and to the general opinion of the heathen world, which regarded them with indifference.

The same reason for enforcing obedience to the bishop appears in the epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians. The bishop of that church, at the time when this epistle was written, was Onesimus, of whom, personally, Ignatius speaks in very high terms. He commends also Burrhus, a deacon of

^a [St. Polycarp, ad Philipp. v.]

^b [St. Matthew, xxiii. 2, 3.]

the same church, together with Crocus, Euplus, and Fronto, all of them probably holding some station in the government of it. Now, if Ignatius remembered how Paul himself had complained that all they who were in Asia (i. e., the Roman province so called, of which Ephesus was one of the principal cities) were turned away from him, and how especially he had commissioned Timotheus to purify the government of the Ephesian church, in order to stop the spreading of false and mischievous principles; what wonder is it that, seeing now such a bishop and such a government as he thoroughly approved of, he should urge the church to the closest union with them, and the strictest obedience to their instructions, as the readiest way of abiding and advancing in the true path of Christian holiness?

Thus, when he speaks of Onesimus as praising the orderliness of the Ephesians,—that they lived according to truth, and that no sect following falsehood dwelt among them,—he adds^a, “For some are wont to carry about their name” (scil., their name of Christians) “falsely and deceitfully, doing deeds unworthy of God: these ye should shun as wild beasts; for they are mad dogs, biting before men are aware: and ye should beware of these, for their madness is hard to cure.”^b And again, “Even your deeds of a fleshly sort are all spiritual, for ye

^a [St. Ignat. ad Ephes. vi.]

^b [Ibid. vii.]

do all things in Jesus Christ; but I know that some have gone aside from that right way, and have an evil doctrine.”^a

This also explains the earnest desire manifested by Ignatius, that the Church should go on in unity. Parties existed bearing the name of Christians, but only serving by their monstrous principles and evil lives to bring that name into dishonour. How closely, then, ought all real Christians to hold together, lest their whole society should fall to pieces. But to the Church, or society of Christians, God's promises were given; Christianity was not meant to be held by a multitude of isolated individuals, but where the lawful government and the majority of a society are, there is the society itself. Hence the strong expression of Ignatius: “Let no man be misled: if a man be not within the altar, he fails of obtaining the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two be of such force, how much more that of the bishop and of the whole church? He, then, who joins not with the rest of the church, he, we may be sure, is proud; for it is written, ‘God resisteth the proud.’ Let us be careful then not to resist our bishop, that we may be subject to God.”^b We should particularly observe the stress here laid on the prayers of a great number, which is just like the language of St.

^a [St. Ignat. ad Ephes. viii. ix.]

^b [Ibid. v.]

Paul^a; but it is quite inconsistent with a system of priestcraft, where the numbers of the people signify nothing, but the virtue is supposed to reside in the prayers of the priest. And although the language here used by Ignatius was very liable to abuse, and although Cyprian, and still more the Church writers of later times, have abused it most palpably, yet still, as used by Ignatius himself, it really contains nothing objectionable, if we only take the pains to understand the circumstances of the case. He saw the Church falling to pieces by the formation of various parties whose principles and practice were alike unchristian. The bishops appointed either immediately or at one remove by the Apostles, were upholding the authority of the Apostles' doctrine, and endeavouring to enforce it. Around them, therefore, was the true Church gathered. Here was a genuine apostolical succession; and to this Church, governed by these bishops, Ignatius earnestly exhorts all Christians to adhere, as separation from it was either abandoning Christianity altogether, and substituting in the place of it some monstrous system of error and wickedness; or else it was the indulgence of individual pride or unsocial temper, in separating from the Christian society, and forming a religion for themselves individually. And if the bishops now had been virtually selected by the

^a 2 Cor. i. 11; iv. 15.

Apostles, as men on whom they could depend; or if they were the only teachers who taught true Christianity now, while other ministers, instead of preaching the gospel, taught Manicheism or Mohammedanism; or, again, if the bishops and their churches formed such a living Christian society, that separation from them could only be the pride or fantastic spirit of a few individuals; then the sentiments of Ignatius, although expressed, according to the temper of the man, with too little qualification, would yet in the main be just and applicable now.

Sect. 2. Epistle to the Smyrnæans.—In this epistle, Ignatius is earnestly writing against those who have been called “Docetæ;” those who contended that our Lord did not really die and rise again, but only seemingly. (*δοκεῖν αὐτὸν πεπονηθέναι.*) These persons also, he says, were unchristian in their spirit and life: “They have no care for charity, nor for widow nor for orphan, nor for the distressed, nor for the prisoner, nor for the hungry or the thirsty. They abstain from the Eucharist, and from public prayer, because they do not allow that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the flesh which suffered for our sins, which in his goodness the Father raised up.”^a

Now, it is manifest that if this passage bears at all upon the priestly notions of the communion, it

^a [St. Ignat. ad Smyrn. vi.]

goes the whole length either of transubstantiation, or at least of consubstantiation. If Ignatius meant to condemn the Docetæ for not thinking highly enough of the elements, as they are called, used in the communion; then undoubtedly his words were very incautiously used, if he did not intend his readers to believe that the bread and wine *were* actually the body and blood of Christ. In this case, his authority may be of use to the members of the Church of Rome, in their disputes with those of the Church of England, but cannot be pleaded consistently by us, so long as we profess to abide by our present Articles and Liturgy. But in truth Ignatius objects to the practice of the Docetæ on a very different ground. He complains of their rejection of the symbol as showing that they rejected that reality which it signified. The Communion was intended to keep in memory the death of our Lord, and through our memory to strengthen our faith, and so to make us actually and personally partakers in the benefits of his death. But the Docetæ said that he had not really died, and had made therefore no real sacrifice for us. Faith in what had no real existence must be vain; and the memory of an unreal event must be vain also. Therefore they rejected the Communion, and in so doing they showed that their notions were not the notions of Christ and his Apostles, and his Church. For the Communion had been instituted by Christ

to keep alive for ever the remembrance of his death ; and this showed that his death was a reality. Now, as the rejection of the Communion followed consistently from their principles, and indeed was required by them ; and as they rejected it for the very reason for which Christ had notoriously instituted it, their rejection of it was an evidence that their principles were not the principles of Christianity. This is the drift of Ignatius's argument, and so understood, it is of validity: otherwise, taken as a mere argument upon the nature and inherent virtue of the Eucharistic symbols, it has nothing to do with the opinions of the Docetæ ; for it is most certain that thousands of Christians have held the most various notions as to this point, and yet have steadily agreed in celebrating the Communion, and have believed most firmly in the reality and saving effects of that death of Christ which it was appointed to commemorate.

A remarkable passage follows:—"Flee divisions, as the beginning of evils. Follow all of you the bishop, as Jesus Christ followeth his Father ; and the estate of the elders as the Apostles ; and reverence the deacons as God's ordinance. Let no man do any thing of matters pertaining to the church apart from (or separate from) his bishop. Let that be counted a valid Eucharist, (*βεβαία*,) which is celebrated under the bishop, or under one who shall have received his permission to celebrate

it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be; in like manner as wheresoever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize, or to celebrate the feast of love; but whatsoever the bishop shall have approved, this is well pleasing to God, that whatever is done may be sure and valid.”^a—*ἀσφαλὲς καὶ βέβαιον*. And then he goes on:—“It is good to acknowledge God and the bishop. He who honours the bishop is honoured by God; he who does any thing without the knowledge of the bishop, serves the Devil.”^b

The first sensation which we ought to have on reading such a passage as this, is one of gratitude to God, who has not permitted any such language to appear in the writings of the Apostles. In fact, the striking difference between the Scriptures and the early Christian writers, is more observable in what the Scriptures do not contain, than in what they do; for their divine truths are for the most part faithfully copied by the writers who so carefully studied them; but in their freedom from all foolishness and error, they stand altogether alone. Doubtless God’s Spirit would not have permitted any Scriptural writer to cast such a snare upon men’s consciences as must have been cast by this passage of Ignatius, if it came to us with divine authority. Judged as a mere human writing, there

^a [Ad Smyrn. viii.]

^b [Ibid. ix.]

is enough of truth in it, and enough of justification in the circumstances under which it was written, to prevent us from passing a harsh sentence on its author ; but blessed be God a thousand times, that no language so exaggerated, and so much more vehement than wise, is to be found in that Word which was designed to be our souls' guide.

I believe fully that Ignatius's horror of divisions in the Christian Church originated in the odious character which those divisions then wore ; inas-much as the separating sects actually separated themselves from the principles of Christianity. I believe, also, that he exalted the authority of the bishops, because he believed that they had been wisely chosen, and that their influence was alone capable of preserving the Church from the evils which surrounded it. It is true, farther, that he was laying down no general and perpetual principle, but speaking to the Christians of Smyrna of his own time, with reference to their own particular bishop. But still the language is unguarded and exaggerated ; it forgets that the bishop, like his people, was fallible ; that man is not a sufficient stay for other men to rest upon ; that if anarchy and faction be evils on the one hand, idolatry of human authority is no less an evil on the other. Compare the tone of this passage with the spirit in which St. Peter expresses himself on the same subject :—"The elders who are among you I

exhort, to feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." ^a No defence of a priestly dominion *could* be extracted from this passage; so perfectly has God's Spirit fenced it round on every side, and tempered one view by its opposite. But the words of Ignatius, taken as they stand, have a tendency to establish in the Christian Church tyranny in the rulers, and idolatry in the people; although I quite believe that if Ignatius had been questioned as to his meaning, he would earnestly have disclaimed the consequences of his language, and would have expressed himself more guardedly.

As to the general position, "that a fraction of any society cannot perform such acts as belong to the society itself," it is indisputably true. No individual, or small party of individuals, could be authorized to do any worldly act in the name of their society, unless they were commissioned by its acknowledged governors. A private man could not sell the church's property, nor give it away in

^a [1 St. Peter, v. 1—5.]

alms ; and so baptism, which is the admission of a new member into the church, requires to be performed by the church itself or with its sanction. And if it be essential to the Communion that it should be shared by all the members of the church, then it too becomes a public act, and requires of course the sanction of public authority. All this is true if we regard the church as a mere human society, and it leads to no tyranny, because it wholly leaves untouched the great question, "What is to be done when the public authorities do not speak the sense of their society, but act wholly in opposition to it?" and merely goes upon the general and ordinary rule, "that the public authorities do represent their society, and are therefore justly considered to possess the exclusive power of acting in its name."

Yet, when we consider the tendencies of power to encroach more and more upon the rights of others, and the immense mischief of draining off as it were the whole vital activity of society into that small portion of it which exercises the supreme government, there is always a danger in making the individual ruler or rulers so completely the representatives of the body, as to sink the body itself into complete insignificance. What the fiction of the *Lex Regia* had made the emperors of Rome, that the words of Ignatius would make the bishops of the Christian Church ; and when

we hear him say, "wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be," we are reminded of a later declaration of the most imperious despotism, "*L'état, c'est moi.*" But most especially dangerous is such language in a religious society; for there despotism is apt soon to become priestcraft, and priestcraft is at once idolatry. And, therefore, our Lord and his Apostles, although they certainly did not wish to encourage turbulence and disobedience to lawful authority amongst Christians, yet have shown themselves no less careful in shutting the door against an excessive reverence for any human teacher or governor. And nothing can be more opposite than the impression likely to be produced by the words of Ignatius, "Follow all of you the bishop, as Jesus Christ followeth his Father: wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be; as, whosoever Christ is, there is the Catholic Church," and especially that most rash expression, "He who does any thing without the knowledge of the bishop serves the Devil;" and by the words of Christ on the other side,—“Call no man your father upon earth; for one is your Father, who is in heaven:” and, “Be not ye called rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.”^a

Still, unguarded as is the language of Ignatius,

^a [St. Matthew, xxiii. 8, 9.]

and though it had a direct tendency to bring in priestcraft, and has been quoted repeatedly in support of the notion of a priesthood; yet it is only just to confess, that Ignatius himself appears to have had no such meaning. His words exaggerate unwisely the power and importance of Christian governors; they make them too universally and without exception the representatives of the church; but they acknowledge in them no priestly character. It is to avoid divisions that Ignatius will have no separate worship and no separate sacraments; he invests the bishop with the full character of the church, and so regards him as the appointed channel of God's gifts to the individual members of it; but it is to the body of the whole church, and not to an order of priests distinct from it, that he believes Christ's promises to have been given, and his authority conveyed. And although the two systems but too often lead practically to the same results, yet, in principle, they are widely different. A priesthood supposed to be of divine appointment is a hopeless evil; it requires nothing less than a new revelation to remove it. But the degree to which the governors of a society may be supposed to represent it, naturally varies according to times and circumstances. There are seasons of peril when a dictatorship affords the only means of safety; that is, when the rulers must wield the whole authority

of society, and the rights and powers of the society must be merged in their persons altogether. But, in quieter times, society deposes far less of its authority, and it is most desirable that it should retain in itself no small portion of life and activity, lest it sink into utter helplessness. It may be that, in the days of Ignatius, the Church did wisely in committing to its rulers an almost absolute authority; it is most certain that it would act most unwisely if it were to do the same thing now.

Sect. 3. Epistle to the Magnesians.—In this epistle there occurs again much of the same sort of strong language which has been already noticed, as to the necessity of being closely united to the bishop and to the elders. But there is nothing connected with our present subject which seems to call for any separate notice.

Sect. 4. Epistle to the Trallians.—In this epistle we find the following passage, which I copy from the text of Mr. Jacobson's edition.

Δεῖ δὲ καὶ τοὺς διακόνους, ὄντας μυστηρίων Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον πᾶσιν ἀρέσκειν· οὐ γὰρ βρωμάτων καὶ ποτῶν εἰσιν διάκονοι, ἀλλ' ἐκκλησίας Θεοῦ ὑπῆρται ^a. “Illos enim,” so Vossius interprets, “non esse ministros esculentorum et poculentorum, sed ministros mysteriorum Dei, sive sacramentorum.” “The μυστήρια Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ are

^a [Ad Trall. ii.]

the sacraments." This is with some a favourite doctrine, and we have seen already that they have not scrupled to ascribe it even to St. Paul, when he calls himself a steward of the mysteries of God. But here is the gradual growth of the corruption of Christianity. In St. Paul's language, "the mysteries of God" mean something quite different from the sacraments; in Ignatius, the expression probably includes the sacraments, but not as the principal part of the idea; in later writers, it would mean the sacraments principally, if not exclusively.

It may be observed, however, that the actual reading in Ignatius is not *μυστηρίων* but *μυστήριον*: the text runs thus in the single MS. now known to be in existence, *τοὺς διακόνους, ὄντας μυστήριον Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. But the old Latin translation, and the longer version of the epistles of Ignatius, agree in reading *μυστηρίων*, and it is also plain, from the corrupt state of the text in many places, that our single MS. is a very bad one. Arndt, of Ratzeburg, however, in an able paper on the genuineness of the epistles of Ignatius, in the 1st Number of the twelfth volume of the *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, defends the reading *μυστήριον*, and interprets it in the sense of "likeness," "copy,"—referring to Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians, chap. v., where Christ is said to have been *διάκονος πάντων*. There seems therefore, on

the whole, no reason to interfere with the actual reading of the MS. At any rate, if we adopt the reading *μυστηρίων*, the passage is not to be read as Mr. Jacobson has edited it, with a comma after *διακόνους*, but, *τοὺς διακόνους ὄντας μυστηρίων, κ. τ. λ.* "It befits those who are ministers of Christ's mysteries," &c. It now remains to be seen what Ignatius meant by *διακόνους μυστηρίων Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*.

Now it may be true that Ignatius amongst the other *μυστήρια* of Christ would have included the sacraments: but the question is, whether the term express the sacraments either exclusively or principally. It cannot be too often repeated, that the whole question with which I am concerned regards the *prominence* of the sacraments in the scheme of Christianity, and by no means their *existence* in that scheme, which I am as ready to allow as any of those who esteem of them most highly. But did Ignatius regard the ministration of the sacraments as the principal part of the deacon's office, or did he include it merely as one out of many parts, and that not a prominent one? So that when he spoke of *μυστήρια Χριστοῦ*, he was thinking principally of other things than the sacraments, although, if he had been asked whether he meant the term to include the sacraments also, he might probably have answered in the affirmative?

a. The word *μυστήριον* occurs several times in the New Testament, but in no one place is there the least pretence for supposing that it so much as includes the sacraments, far less that it speaks of them principally. I have already noticed the palpable misinterpretation of St. Paul's words^a, where some have fancied that St. Paul meant to call himself a "dispenser of the sacraments." But with this exception, I do not know that any one has ventured, even wrongly, to ascribe this sense to the word. The confusion as to the meaning of the Latin word "sacramentum," which is the old translation of *μυστήριον*, in Ephesians v. 32, needs scarcely to be noticed; because neither does "sacramentum" in the language of the old Latin Christians mean what has been since technically called a "sacrament," nor is it applied to any rite or institution in which men can partake on earth, but to the wonderful incarnation of our Lord, in that he left his Father to join himself to our nature, and so to become one with us.

β. Ignatius himself twice uses the word *μυστήριον* in the scriptural sense; that is, "a truth or doctrine not discoverable by man but revealed to him by God." Thus the three truths, that Christ should have been born as a man, and born of a virgin, and that he should have died for us, are called by Ignatius "three mysteries," Ephes. 19; and Christ's

^a 1 Corinth. iv. 1.

life and death are again called "a mystery," Magnesians, 9; and he adds, "through this mystery we received our faith, and for the sake of this we wait patiently, that we may be found Christ's disciples." The probability is, therefore, that if Ignatius called the deacons "ministers of Christ's mysteries," he meant to call them "ministers of the great truths of Christianity," and not merely "ministers to distribute meat and drink to the poor in alms."

γ. Even in Cyprian's time the word "sacramentum," which was from the earliest period of the Church the corresponding Latin term to the Greek *μυστήριον*, is applied generally to the solemn and deep things of Christianity, without any especial reference to what are now called "sacraments." In Cyprian's 63rd letter, which contains a long argument on the necessity of using both water and wine in the cup at the Communion, the term "sacramentum" is applied, as we might expect, several times to various points in the institution of the Lord's Supper. So again, in the 72nd letter, we find it applied both to baptism and to the laying on of hands, or confirmation. But, in like manner, Cyprian speaks also of the many "sacramenta," "deep truths of God," which are contained in the Lord's Prayer*. So he speaks also of the "sacramentum Trinitatis," in his 73rd let-

* De Oratione Dominicâ, p. 142; ed. Amstelod. 1691.

ter; of the “*sacramentum vitæ æternæ*,” in his Treatise on the Lord’s Prayer, p. 151; of the “*sacramentum unitatis*,” or mystery of the unity of the Church, and of the “*sacramentum divinæ traditionis*,” letter 74th, where it means little more than “the sacredness of the lessons taught us by Christ and his Apostles.” Thus it appears that, in the middle of the third century, and in the writings of a man sufficiently inclined to exalt the ordinances of the Church, the term *sacramentum* was not even yet exclusively applied to what have been since called sacraments.

Sect. 5. Epistle to the Philadelphians.—This epistle, besides various other passages, insisting on the necessity of uniting with the bishop, as in the other epistles, contains also the following:

Σπουδάσατε οὖν μιᾷ εὐχαριστίᾳ χρῆσθαι· μία γὰρ σὰρξ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἐν ποτήριον εἰς ἑνῶσιν τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ· ἐν θυσιαστήριον ὡς εἰς ἐπίσκοπος, ἅμα τῷ πρεσβυτερίῳ καὶ διακόνοις τοῖς συνδούλοις μου, ἵνα ὁ εἰς πράσσητε κατὰ Θεὸν πράσσητε^a. There is nothing here in what is said of the Communion deserving of remark, except the use of the word *θυσιαστήριον*. Did Ignatius mean to call the Communion table an altar, and the bishop who administered the Communion a priest sacrificing at the altar?

The answer is, that he did not: but that by the

^a [Ad Philadelph. iv.]

term *θυσιαστήριον* he meant the Church of Christ, and the sacrifice to be offered on that altar was the sacrifice of prayer and praise, and of the bodies and souls of every Christian; and by combining together the words “one altar and one bishop,” he meant that there should be only one Church and one government of it; not a multitude of separate bodies of Christians with their separate rulers: for that then the sacrifice of the Christian law would no longer be offered in unity.

That *θυσιαστήριον* in the early Christian writers signifies the Church of God, as St. Paul also calls the Church the *ναός*, or temple of God, may be shown from various instances. The earliest and best example of this is to be found in the New Testament itself, in the epistle to the Hebrews. There, in the 13th chapter, v. 10—15, we have the following remarkable words: *Ἐχομεν θυσιαστήριον, ἐξ οὗ φαγεῖν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν οἱ τῇ σκηνῇ λατρεύοντες. κ. τ. λ.* Where the argument runs thus: our sacrifice, as an atoning sacrifice must have been, was offered without the camp; that is, away from and out of the pale of the earthly Israel. We follow him without the camp also: our altar is no longer in the temple at Jerusalem, but without its precincts; it is where Christ was offered; that is virtually everywhere, where Christ’s people are gathered together. There is their altar in the midst of their own company,

and on that altar they offer up their sacrifices, now rendered acceptable through His atoning sacrifice, their spiritual sacrifice of prayer and praise and acts of charity. Of this altar the Jews have no right to eat; that is, as they would in the like case have no right to eat of the actual sacrifices offered on a literal altar which was quite distinct from their own temple, so they have no right to partake in the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise offered on the Christian altar, or in the spiritual bread of life, communion with Christ, which is there for ever present.

Thus also Polycarp, in his epistle to the Philip-
pians, bids the widows of the Christian Church to remember that they are God's altar^a, and that every offering offered upon that altar must be without blemish^b. That is, Christians themselves are God's spiritual altar, and their prayers, praises, and holy actions are the proper sacrifices to be offered upon it.

Thus also Ignatius himself, in his epistle to the Ephesians, says, "If a man be not within the altar, he fails to obtain the bread of God;"^c and again, in

^a So in the Apostol. Constitut. II. 26 ad fin., we find the same notion, αἱ χήραι καὶ ὀρφανοὶ εἰς τύπον τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου λελογίσθωσαν ὑμῖν· αἱ τε παρθέναι εἰς τύπον τοῦ θυμιατηρίου τετιμῆσθωσαν, καὶ τοῦ θυμιάματος. Is this upon the notion that offerings were given for the widows, &c., and paid to them as on an altar?

^b [Ad Philip. iv.]

^c [Ad Ephes. v.]

the epistle to the Trallians, "He that is within the altar, he is clean."^a In the latter passage there follows immediately this explanation: "that is, he who does any thing apart from the bishop, and the company of elders, and the deacon, he is not clean in his conscience." And after the former passage the writer goes on, "For if the prayer of one or two persons has so great force, how much more is the force of the prayer of the bishop and of the whole Church?" It appears, therefore, from both these passages, that the altar is the Church of Christ, and that the sacrifices offered on it are prayers. And as it is said in the epistle to the Hebrews, that "the Jews have no right to eat of our altar," so Ignatius says, "that he who is without the Church cannot obtain the bread of God;" that is, as the shewbread under the law might be eaten only by the priests, so Christ, who is our Bread of life, is only to be enjoyed by those who are his priests, ministering at his altar, that is, by his people, who on the altar of his Church offer to him their prayers and themselves.

Sect. 6. Epistle to Polycarp.—In this epistle, I may notice the passage in which Christians proposing to marry are recommended to do it with the sanction and approbation of the bishop, in order that their marriage may be according to God, and not according to mere passion. This

^a [Ad Trall. vii.]

advice is remarkable, as it shows to what a length Ignatius carried his notions of unity, and what a Spartan discipline as to the merging the individual will in the will of the society, or of its representative, he would fain have introduced into the Christian Church. Regarding the bishops of the several churches as men eminently fitted to bring their people to the purest state of Christian perfection, and considering that amongst their people, their subjects I might almost call them, there existed the greatest varieties of wild opinion and licentious practice, he saw no other remedy than to invest the rulers of the Church with absolute authority. Hence, he not only wished to unite in their persons every power of government, and to subject to their absolute control every thing that might be called a public or social act of the Church as a body; as when he would have no Communion celebrated without the bishop's authority; but he would even give them dominion over acts most strictly belonging to the individual Christian; even for marriage he would require their sanction, as being the fathers of the Christian family: they were to judge whether the proposed union was entered upon in a Christian spirit, or whether it was desired from mere youthful passion. Now this subjection of the individual to the society, even in the most private relations of domestic life, was very agreeable to the spirit of

many of the ideal commonwealths of the Greek philosophy; and, in the famous constitution of Sparta, it had been actually established in practice. Much was to be said in its behalf, by those especially who were most aware of the evils of the opposite extreme, of leaving the individual will wholly uncontrolled, except if it should attempt to offer a direct injury to another. Nor can we doubt that Ignatius recommended pure despotism as sincerely and as conscientiously as ever men of different views and under different circumstances have protested against it. But instead of seeing in the letters of Ignatius a strong display of views which have been often entertained by wise and good men, and which in this particular case were more than ordinarily justified by the peculiar circumstances of the Church, men have sought to find in him a perpetual law of Church government, and have taken his most vehement expressions as an authoritative definition of the powers which ought to be always exercised by the rulers of the Christian society. Nor is this all; but as persons who have been capable of so misusing him were not likely to have very clear notions of government and the questions connected with it, so it has happened that confounding different times and usages, and being the slaves of a name, they have transferred what Ignatius says of the necessity of an absolute government in the hands of the bishop,

to the later system of the mystical power of the priesthood; and where he would acknowledge nothing as an act of the church which was not done by the authority of the bishop, they have quoted him as sanctioning their doctrine of the necessity of a priestly consecration of the elements to the sacramental virtue of the Lord's Supper: where he would have the bishop's consent obtained for all marriages, that they might be such as a Christian ought to contract, he has been quoted as enforcing the necessity of the priestly benediction to give to the rite of marriage any validity*.

Here then we close our present inquiry: but one or two points seem naturally to arise from it, and with some notice of these I will conclude this chapter.

1st. We do not find in these early Christian writers the doctrine of the priesthood and sa-

* "Hinc clare patet," says Smith, "*nuptias non fuisse habitas justas et legitimas absque sententiâ episcopi, et benedictione sacerdotali, in primis Christianismi seculis.*" Smith is confounding two ideas perfectly distinct, one of which Ignatius had, while of the other not the slightest trace is to be found in him. He did wish that the bishop should have the power of a father over the whole church, that his consent should be obtained before any Christian could marry. This is a power of government, and this he undoubtedly wished to give to the bishop of every church. But to require a priestly blessing in order to hallow the rite of marriage is a very different notion, and one of which Ignatius says nothing whatever.

craments which was afterwards prevalent in the Church; but we find language which will sufficiently account for the subsequent introduction of that doctrine; whereas the Scriptures not only do not contain it, but absolutely repel it: between them and it there is a great gulf fixed, over which no art of man can cast a bridge.

2nd. A full consideration of this language in the early uncanonical writers, will lead to three conclusions. While, in the first place, it marks the wide distinction between them and the Scripture, and should lead us to thank God that the scriptural writers were so secured by his Spirit, not from error only, but from such unguarded and one-sided language, if I may so speak, as might readily become the occasion of error; we shall, in the second place, be spared the pain of believing that Christianity was grossly corrupted in the very next generation after the Apostles by the men who professed themselves to be the Apostles' true followers. We shall rather have reason to believe that their language, taken in their own meaning, and as applied to the circumstances of the Church in their own times, was substantially true. We shall be able to sympathize with Ignatius in his earnest desire to keep the Church in unity with its bishops, and with Clement in his sense of the value of their Apostolical succession; we shall readily confess that to this unity, and this real

Apostolical succession of the early bishops, we owe the general acknowledgment of the authority of the Apostles and of their writings ;—we owe it, in fact, that our Christianity at this day is that of St. John, and not of Cerinthus ; of St. Paul, and not of his Judaizing adversaries. And thirdly, comparing these early Christian writers with the Scriptures on the one hand, and with the later Church system on the other, as developed in the forged Apostolical constitutions, we shall be able to trace three stages through which Christianity passed, and which, indeed, exhibit what may be called the law of decay in all institutions, whether administered by men only, or devised by them as well as administered. The first and perfect state exhibits the spirit of the institution not absolutely without all forms, for that is impossible, but regarding them as things wholly subordinate, indifferent in themselves, and therefore deriving their value from particular times and circumstances ; and as such particular times are not yet come, the spirit of the institution is as yet wholly independent of them ; it uses their ministry, but in no way depends upon their aid. Then comes the second stage, when from particular circumstances the existence of the spirit of the institution depends on the adherence to particular outward regulations. The men of this generation insist, as well they may, on the necessity of these forms, for without them the

spirit would be lost. And because others profess to honour the spirit no less than they do, therefore they are obliged to make the forms rather than the spirit their peculiar rallying word. Around and for these forms is the stress of battle: but their defenders well know that they are but the husk in which the seed of life is sheltered; that they are but precious for the sake of the seed which they contain, and to the future growth of which they, under the inclemencies of the actual season, are an indispensable condition.

Then the storm passes away, and the precious seed, safely sheltered within its husk, has escaped destruction. The forms have done their appointed work, and, like the best of mortal instruments their end should be, that after having served their own generation by the will of God, they should fall asleep and see corruption. But in the third stage men cannot understand this law. Their fathers clung to certain forms to the death; they said—and said truly—that unless these were preserved, the spirit would perish. The sons repeat their fathers' words, although in their mouths they are become a lie. Their fathers insisted on the forms even more earnestly than on the spirit, because in their day the forms were peculiarly threatened. But now the forms are securely established, and the great enemy who strove to destroy

them whilst they protected the seed of life, is now as ready to uphold them, because they may become the means of stifling it. But the sons, unheeding of this change, still insist mainly on the importance of the forms, and seeing these triumphant, they rejoice, and think that the victory is won, just at the moment when a new battle is to be fought, and the forms oppress the seed instead of protecting it. Still they uphold the form, for that is a visible object of worship, and they teach their children to do the same. Age after age the same language is repeated, whilst age after age its falsehood is becoming more flagrant; and still it is said, "We are treading in the steps of our fathers from the very beginning; even at the very first these forms were held to be essential." So when the husk cracks, and would fain fall to pieces by the natural swelling of the seed within, a foolish zeal labours to hold it together: they who would deliver the seed, are taxed with longing to destroy it; they who are smothering it, pretend that they are treading in the good old ways, and that the husk was, is, and ever will be essential. And this happens because men regard the form and not the substance; because they think that to echo the language of their forefathers is to be the faithful imitators of their spirit; because they are blind to the lessons which all nature teaches them, and

would for ever keep the egg-shell unbroken, and the sheath of the leaf unburst, not seeing that the wisdom of winter is the folly of spring.

So it has been with the unity of the Church under its bishops, and with their apostolical succession. In the second stage of the Church, these were really essential to the protection of Christian truth : in its third stage, through many generations, they have been a mere empty name, powerless to preserve or to increase the spirit of Christianity, but often only too powerful in stifling and in corrupting it.

CHAPTER IV.

IN the inquiry which has been pursued through the last two chapters, we have seen that the doctrine of the priesthood is repelled by the Scriptures, and not acknowledged by the earliest uncanonical Christians. The first of these results ought to be abundantly sufficient for our practice: the doctrine which the Scripture not only does not teach, but which it virtually condemns, must be inconsistent with Christianity. The second result, although not needed practically, is yet on two accounts interesting. It is satisfactory to find that the Church in the very first century had not grossly corrupted Christian truth. It is also satisfactory to find in the peculiar circumstances and language of these early writers, an explanation, and something of a palliation for the grievous errors of the subsequent age. Had any generation of Christians fallen at once from the perfect spirit of Scriptural truth into the doctrine of the priesthood, it would have seemed hardly less than apostacy from the faith; but Ignatius and his contemporaries exhibit the Church in a sort of transition state, which, although not one of error, yet rendered the actual errors of the following period more excusable. We now proceed to see how the errors themselves came in;

how government was converted into priesthood; and how Judaism, driven from its own ceremonies, and obliged to abandon circumcision and the distinction of clean and unclean meats, took possession of the Christian sacraments, and held with effect under their names the very same mischievous doctrines which, when connected with the names of Jewish ceremonies, the Church had been so earnestly warned to avoid. So what took place with regard to the sacraments, was the exact converse of what happened with respect to Apostolical succession; each instance equally confirming the truth, that men are ruled by names and not by things. On the one hand, the benefits of a real Apostolical succession were supposed to be retained, because there was still an Apostolical succession nominally: on the other hand, men thought that they were safe from Judaism, because they put the word baptism in the place of circumcision, and talked of the mystic virtue of the elements in the Communion, instead of the purifying nature of clean meats, and the defiling character of such as were unclean.

Let us now see in what respects the Church, early in the second century, was ready to slide into the doctrine of a priesthood, with all its accompanying corruptions of Christian truth.

The beginning of the second century found the Church under the government of bishops, many of

whom had derived their appointment from the Apostles themselves, at only one or two removes; that is to say, they had been chosen by men who had themselves been chosen by an Apostle, or by persons such as Timotheus, in whom an Apostle had entertained full confidence. They were engaged in an arduous struggle not only against heathenism, but against various monstrous forms of error which claimed to themselves the name of Christianity; and, as happens naturally in such times of danger, they drew to themselves more and more, not through ambition, but by the necessity of the case, the whole power of the Christian society. They were the representatives of the Church, and without them the Church had no existence; those were not the prayers of the church, that was not her Communion, which the bishop did not either preside at or sanction. Here, then, was a government of a religious society, whose sanction was considered necessary to the religious acts of that society, and which grounded its claim to obedience mainly on the fact that it derived its authority all but immediately from the Apostles, and so might be supposed to represent them faithfully. We see here at once two facts, which, with a very little corruption, might become two of the most essential elements of a priesthood; we see the germ of the necessity of a priestly consecration of the elements in

the sacraments, and of the transmission of the priestly character by a sort of elective succession.

Now, if it had pleased God that the Church at this period should have become a sovereign society, as it did two centuries later, it might have been more easy to prevent the government of the bishops from being confounded with the notion of a priesthood. Had they been able, that is, to exercise the full powers of government, to control society in the last resort, and to exercise jurisdiction over life and property, the largeness and outward greatness of their functions would have so satisfied men's minds, that none would have sought for them any higher or nobler office than that which they were manifestly seen to exercise. But government in a subordinate society, and divested consequently of its sovereign character, is of necessity far less imposing. As a government, it is wholly eclipsed, to the vulgar eye at any rate, by that greater government of general or sovereign society, to which it must be itself subject. Considered as a ruler, the bishop of a Christian church appeared a far less important person than the Proconsul of a province; the most numerous synod was as nothing when compared with the sovereign of the Empire. Yet there was in the Church a greatness more than the Empire could boast of; there was a sense in which its bishops were greater than Cæsar. For

a time this was even outward and tangible; so long as the Apostles possessed and conferred those extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, which no wealth of man could purchase, nor power compel. When these were withdrawn, the real greatness still remained, but it was such as common minds can with difficulty appreciate. The moral elevation conferred by truth and holiness; the willing obedience of good men; the task of guiding a society whose members spiritually considered were privileged far above the rest of mankind, to be as it were the salt of the very salt of the earth itself; these were points of greatness most real and most exalted. But the mind of man, disappointed of what is outward and sensible, turns not to what is spiritual, but to what is mystical; unsatisfied with the real excellence of the office of a Christian bishop, it coveted the mystical and false dominion of a priest.

According to Christ's ordinance, the rulers of the church were distinguished above their brethren in all that may be called the human relations of the Christian society; they had authority both to teach and to govern. The one only occasion on which this distinction was to cease, was when the church as a body came into direct relation with God and Christ; that is to say, in its public prayers, and in the Holy Communion. Rulers and teachers cease to be distinguished from the

people, exactly in those acts in which the priest's distinction is greatest. Others may teach, and others may govern; for these are human relations: but in direct relation with God, the priest's mediation is wanted; he must pray for the people, and their communion with God can only be carried on through him. But as prayer and the Holy Communion were the church's most solemn acts, as a body, if its rulers here were on a level with other Christians, it seemed to lessen the dignity of their office. It was not enough that the presence or sanction of the bishop was required to render the Christian supper a true Communion of the church; nor that, in the celebration of it, the bread and wine were, to prevent confusion, distributed by the principal members of the society, either by the bishop himself or by the elders. The priestly mystical power, which seemed so much greater than the mere government of a subordinate or municipal society, was not here to be found. Another step was to be taken, not only that the bishop's authority as head of the church should be required in order to invest any meeting of Christians with the public character of the church, but that religiously the church itself could not communicate with Christ without the mediation, not of the bishop alone, but of the bishop or some one of his presbyters, all of whom were to possess equally with him this mediatorial cha-

racter. Nor was it to be a mere matter of order that the bread and wine were distributed by those who presided at the meeting to the several communicants, after the usual form of thanksgiving before meat, had been uttered; but from this distribution and this form of thanksgiving they were to derive their sacramental virtue, and having been before mere common bread and wine, they became immediately, through the virtue of the words so uttered, and of the priestly character of him who uttered them, changed into the body and blood of Christ. It could not but follow from this, that the Communion should be represented as an actual, not a spiritual sacrifice, in which there was a visible offering made, and which therefore required a priest.

But one of the oldest representations now extant, of the celebration of the Communion in the ancient Church, seems in a remarkable manner to avoid these corruptions. I allude to the famous fragment of Irenæus, first published by Pfaff, from a MS. in the library of Turin, and given in the Benedictine edition of the works of Irenæus, Venice, 1734. In this famous passage, Irenæus contrasts the spiritual sacrifices of Christianity with the carnal sacrifices of the Jewish law. He divides the Christian sacrifices into two kinds; those of prayer and thanksgiving, and those which consist in the offering up of ourselves to God, to

do him service. "Wherefore," says he, "the offering also of the Eucharist is not carnal but spiritual, and thereby it is clean (*καθαρά*). For we offer to God the bread, and the cup of blessing, rendering thanks to him, for that he has bidden the earth to bring forth these fruits for our nourishment. And here, having completed our offering, we call upon the Holy Spirit, that he may render (*ἀποφύνη*) this sacrifice to be, both the bread the body of Christ, and the cup the blood of Christ, that they who have partaken of these symbols (*ἀντιτύπων*) may obtain forgiveness of their sins, and life eternal. They, then, who bring these offerings in remembrance of the Lord, do not join themselves to the ordinances of the Jews, but worshipping (*λειτουργοῦντες*) spiritually, shall be called the children of wisdom."

Now this most remarkable passage exhibits in a surprising completeness that notion of the Communion which has been given in the first chapter of this work. The sacrifices or offerings of Christians must be spiritual, for we must worship God in spirit and in truth; and the offering of the Eucharist is *therefore* a clean and accepted offering, because it is *spiritual*. How then is the Eucharist a *spiritual* sacrifice? Not because of the offering of bread and wine, but because of spiritual acts accompanying or following that offering; the acts, namely, of thanksgiving and prayer. Of thanks-

giving, when we thank God while offering the bread and wine before Him, that He has given us these things for our bodily sustenance: of prayer, when, after having completed the offering, and partaken of the bread and wine, we pray to God the Holy Spirit, that He will make that temporal food also a spiritual food; and that as bread and wine support our bodies, so, whilst in eating that bread and drinking that wine we remember Christ's body and Christ's blood, His body and blood may be the redemption and the strengthening of our souls to everlasting life. Thus, the bread that perisheth is changed by the Holy Spirit into the bread of life; having eaten bodily for our bodily good, the Holy Spirit guides us to eat spiritually for our spiritual good. But the soul feeds itself not with the mouth and teeth, but by thoughts and love. To eat spiritually, is to assimilate an object to our spirits by drawing it to them by thought, and embracing it by love. He, therefore, who eateth Christ shall live by him; because, by believing in Christ and loving him, he takes Christ into his spirit, and his nature becomes assimilated to that of Christ, and so he lives and must live for ever. Truly, therefore, says Irenæus, that they who offer the bread and wine to God, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus; that is, who, after having partaken of their bodily food, and therefore, *every day*, do pray to the Holy

Spirit that their souls may feed upon Christ no less as their spiritual food; they by that prayer convert what else would be a formal and Jewish sacrifice into one that is Christian and spiritual. Their service to God (*Λειτουργία*) is a spiritual service, and they who so serve Him have no fellowship with the ordinances of the Jews, but shall be called the children of wisdom.

But observe that here, in this description of the Christian Communion, there is no mention of a priest's words of consecration changing the bread and wine *beforehand* into the body and blood of Christ; and so giving occasion to all manner of superstitions and profaneness. The bread and wine are received with thanksgiving, *as bread and wine*, as fruits of the earth, which God our Creator has commanded the earth to yield for our bodily support. Then, *after they have been received*, comes, not a form of consecration by an earthly priest, but a prayer to God the Holy Spirit, to Him who communes with us only as spirits, dealing not with our natural life, but with our spiritual; that He may render to each of us the bodily and outward offering a spiritual and inward offering; that by eating bread and drinking wine, not simply as fruits of the earth, but in remembrance of Christ's death, our spirits may feed upon Christ himself, in all his manifold relations to us, and so be strengthened by him and become like to him

more and more. In other words, we pray to the Holy Spirit to keep alive in us daily our spiritual appetites and powers, that they may desire Christ and receive him into themselves, as naturally—naturally, I mean, according to our renewed nature—as the healthy body according to its nature desires and digests its bodily food.

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